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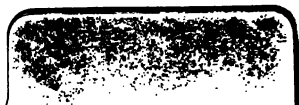
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JOHN GODFREY'S
FORTUNES;

RELATED BY HIMSELF.

BY BAYARD TAYLOR,
AUTHOR OF "HANNAH THURSTON," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, SON, AND MARSTON,
14, LUDGATE HILL.
1864.

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250 v. 24.



LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHURCH LANE.

CONTENTS TO VOL II.

CHAPTER I.	
IN WHICH I DECLARE, DECIDE, AND VENTURE . . .	PAGE 1
CHAPTER II.	
IN WHICH I GO TO MARKET, BUT CANNOT SELL MY WARES	24
CHAPTER III.	
CONCERNING MY ENTRANCE INTO MRS. VERY'S BOARD- ING-HOUSE, AND VARIOUS OTHER MATTERS. . .	48
CHAPTER IV.	
DESCRIBING MR. WINCH'S RECONCILIATION BALL, AND ITS TWO FORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES	65
CHAPTER V.	
WHICH "CONDENSES THE MISCELLANEOUS" OF A YEAR	90
CHAPTER VI.	
IN WHICH I AGAIN BEHOLD AMANDA	109

CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
RELATING HOW I CAME INTO POSSESSION OF MY IN- HERITANCE	137

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH I DINE WITH MR. CLARENDON, AND MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF MR. BRANDAGEE . . .	158
---	-----

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH I ATTEND MRS. YORKTON'S RECEPTION . .	185
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH I ENTER GENTEEL SOCIETY, AND MEET MY RELATIVES	212
--	-----

CHAPTER XI.

DESCRIBING MY INTERVIEW WITH MARY MALONEY . .	235
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

A DINNER-PARTY AT DELMONICO'S	252
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

CONTAINING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, MY VISIT TO THE IOHNEUMON	275
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH I TALK WITH TWO GIRLS AT A VERY SOCIABLE PARTY	299
--	-----

JOHN GODFREY'S FORTUNES.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH I DECLARE, DECIDE, AND VENTURE.

I HAVE already spoken of the exceptional way in which my nature developed itself—by sudden bounds, which, in a very short time, carried me quite out of my former self. The two or three, or possibly twenty inherited elements were not smoothly blended in my composition; the blood of my father's and mother's lines seemed only to run side by side, not mingle in a new result, in my veins. It was a long time—very long after the period of which I am now writing—before I could comprehend my own laws of growth and being, and reconcile their

apparent inconsistencies. As yet, my power of introversion was of the shallowest kind. I floated along, with closed eyes, on the current of my sensations and my fancies.

My growing attachment to Miss Amanda Bratton, however, was the means of pushing me a long stride forwards. It thoroughly penetrated me with a soft, ideal warmth, far enough removed from the strong flame of ripe masculine passion, and gently stimulated all my mental and moral energies. My ambition began to find its proper soil of self-reliance, and to put forth its roots. A new force was at work in my frame, giving strength and elasticity to the muscles, "keying up" many a slack fibre, lifting the drooping lid of the eye and steadying its gaze, and correcting, with a clearer outline, the boyish softness of the face. I no longer shrank from the coming encounter with the world, but longed for the test of courage and the measure of strength.

Yet, in one respect, I felt myself still a coward. Although convinced of the eternal devotion of my heart to the beloved object, I had not dared to

declare it. I saw her frequently, and our relation became more and more sweetly intimate and confidential ; but I never surprised a blush when I came, nor detected a tender tremor of voice when I left. Her nature was as calm, and apparently as limpid, as a shaded pool in the heart of a forest. When I looked in her clear, unchanging eyes, as they steadily rested on mine, I felt the presence of a pure, unsuspecting, virgin soul. It seemed to me that my ever-present consciousness of love was met by as profound an unconsciousness. I longed, yet dreaded to arouse her from her peaceful and innocent dream.

The solution of my two uncertainties was hastened by an unexpected occurrence. Early in March I was surprised by a visit from Rand, who came, as he said, on some business in which D. J. Mulford and Squire Bratton were both concerned. Of course, he was the guest of the latter during the two or three days of his stay. He came over to the mill on the evening of his arrival, and almost embraced me in a gush of affectionate ardour when we met. I was equally delighted, and took him at once up to my

room for a chat, as on our Sunday afternoons in Reading.

"Why, Godfrey, old boy," said he, lighting a cigar without ceremony, "what a snug little den you have! And Bratton tells me you're a good hand at the school, and do credit to his choice. I must say I'm glad it has turned out so, for I took a little of the responsibility upon myself in the beginning, you remember. Bratton's a keen, long-headed man—something of a swell, between ourselves; but so is your affectionate old uncle, for that matter. By the way, I've made Woolley's acquaintance in the way of professional business;—oh, you needn't be alarmed; your little legacy had nothing to do with it. I'm sorry I can't explain myself more particularly, but these matters are confidential, you know. I'm posted up about all the business in Mulford's hands, and he finds it convenient to let me help him now and then. I say, though, Godfrey—no, 'Selim,' I mean—you are getting famous. That Hero and Leander article was copied into the 'Gazette,' the other day. Of course, when I saw

'Yule's Mill' at the bottom, I knew what bird had whistled. I congratulate you—upon my soul I do!"

I was not proof against such hearty, outspoken sympathy. Before Rand left I had confided to him my most cherished literary hopes and desires, had read to him the best of my treasures in manuscript, and asked his advice as to the next step I ought to take.

"Leave here, by all means," he said. "Go to Philadelphia, or, still better, to New York, where you'll find the right sort of work. You may come to write novels or tragedies, in the course of time, and make as much in a month as you would in a year with such a school as this. I should advise you, though, Selim" (he persisted in addressing me so), "to get into some newspaper or book business; it's more solid and respectable. Poets, you know, are always dissipated and finish with the poor-house."

I resented this statement with great warmth.

"Oh, well," he continued, "I didn't mean that that would be *your* fate, Selim. Besides, it may

work off after a while. Lots of fellows catch poetry, and have it a year or two, and it don't seem to do them any harm. Mulford wrote a song for the last Presidential campaign, to the tune of 'Tullahgorum,' and it doesn't sound so bad, when he sings it. But, to come to the point, the city's the place for you, or any man that wants to live by his wits. Only keep your eyes skinned, and don't let the hair grow on your tongue. You must either have gold in your pocket, or brass in your face. Most people can't tell one from t'other."

Rand's expressions jarred harshly on my more delicate nature; but, then, I knew precisely what he was — good-hearted, I believed, but thoroughly unideal. The main thing was, his judgment coincided with my own; he, too, recognized that I was fitted for a more important field of action. The very materialism of his views gave them greater practical value in my eyes. Not that I paid much regard to this side of the question; but it is always more comfortable to have the conclusions of selfishness with you than against you.

My first plan had been to select Philadelphia as my future residence. My poetical pseudonym was known to at least one literary paper there, and I might make the acquaintance of Saxon, author of the series of "Moral Novels," and Brightaxe, who wrote the dramatic poem of the "Traitor of Talladega." On the other hand, the *diu majores* had their seats in New York; and I fancied Irving, Cooper, Percival, and poets whose names I will not mention because they are still living, seated day by day around the same Olympian board, and talking in splendid tropes and cadences. Even if they only asked for potatoes, there must be a certain rhythmic grace in the words, with cæsural pauses falling at classic intervals. Ye gods! what a fool I still was!

There was at that time a monthly magazine called "The Hesperian," published in New York. It was devoted to literature and fashion, and was illustrated both with coloured figures copied from "Le Follet," and mezzotints of mushy texture, representing such subjects as "The Mother's Blessing," or "He Comes Too Late." I looked upon the latter as miracles of

art, and imbibed the contributions as the very cream of literature. The names of the writers were printed in capitals on the last page of the cover, and my heart throbbed when I saw Adeliza Choate among them. I wondered whether I could not keep step with her on the Parnassian steep; to have *my* name so printed was a downright assurance of immortality. Accordingly, I picked out my choicest manuscript and forwarded it with a note, signed with my proper name. By a happy coincidence, the very day after Rand's arrival I received a note from "G. Jenks, Publisher, per W. Timms," stating that my poem would appear in the May number; further, that it was not G. Jenks's habit to pay a *nom de plume*, but that he would send me the magazine gratuitously for six months.

This piece of good fortune decided me. True, it opened no prospect of remunerative employment, but then I should not be obliged to pay for "The Hesperian."

As I was walking home from school, reading the letter over again, Rand and Squire Bratton, coming

up from the direction of the "The Buck," overtook me. The latter was unusually cordial and condescending, insisting that I should take tea at his house that evening, as my friend Rand was to return to Reading the next morning. Of course, I was only too willing to comply.

After tea, Miss Amanda opened her piano and sang for us. My enjoyment of her talent, however, was a little disturbed by Rand's prosaic whispers of "She's been put through the regular paces at school, and no mistake. That style of thing wasn't meant for Upper Samaria."

At the close of the song, tears of feeling swam in my eyes, but Rand loudly clapped his hands. "You have an exquisite touch, Miss Bratton," he called across the room; "it's rare to find so much musical talent."

"I have no doubt you hear much better music in Reading, Mr. Rand," she modestly replied.

"No, I assure you!" he exclaimed, in his most earnest voice, starting from his seat, and approaching her. "The Miss Clevengers are called fine

performers, but I prefer your style. They bang and hammer so, you can hardly make out what it is they're playing. It doesn't touch your feelings."

Hang the fellow! I thought. If I had but half his assurance, I should know my fate before twenty-four hours are over. I did not hear the conversation which ensued, for Squire Bratton turned towards me with some question about the school; but I could mark the honeyed softness of his voice, as he hung over her music-stool. I did not know why I should feel disturbed. He was a chance visitor—had never seen her before, and might never come again. She was bound to treat him with proper courtesy, and her manner was not such as to invite an immediate familiarity. There was nothing anywhere, yet a foolish, feverish unrest took possession of me.

Later in the evening, the album was produced. Miss Amanda immediately turned to *my* page, and said—

"Oh, Mr. Rand, you must read what Mr. Godfrey has written."

"Capital!" he exclaimed, after he had perused the lines. "What a nice touch of fancy! Godfrey, you must really have been inspired. But *such* a flower would make almost any bird sing—even a kill-deer like myself."

He looked full in her face as he uttered the words. Involuntarily, I did the same thing, to note how she would receive the brazen compliment.

"You shall have a chance, then," she quietly said; "I will bring you pen and ink directly."

"Oh, by Jove, that's taking me up with a vengeance!" Rand exclaimed. "I couldn't do such a thing to save my life. Godfrey, you must help me."

"I'm not a mocking-bird. I can only sing my own song."

She smiled, but without looking at me.

"Well, then," said Rand, "I must get something out of my memory. How will this do?"

"My pen is bad, my ink is pale,
My love to you shall never fail."

"No," said she, taking the book from his hand,

"I will not have anything of the kind. You are making fun of my album, and I'll put it away."

"Ah, now," groaned Rand, assuming an expression of penitence. But it was too late. The book was already removed, and Miss Bratton came back with an arch air of reproof, saying to him, "You must behave better another time."

"Oh, I shall always be afraid of you."

I went home that night with an increase of hope, and a growing determination to declare my sentiments. I scarcely slept, so busily was my mind occupied in creating possible situations, and enacting the tender drama in advance. I succeeded in everything but her answers, which I could not—through sympathy with myself—make rejective, yet did not dare to make consensive.

I had hoped, all along, that some happy accident might disclose the truth—that some mutually felt warmth of longing might bring us naturally to the brink where my confession would be the first step beyond; but no such came. I must either seek or make the opportunity. After much painful un-

certainly of mind, I hit upon what I suppose must be a very general device of young lovers—to announce my approaching departure, and be guided by the manner in which she should receive it.

The month of March drew to a close, and I had but one week more of the school before the coveted chance arrived. It was Saturday afternoon, and one of those delicious days of windless and cloudless sunshine when the sad-hued earth sleeps, and sleeping, dreams of summer. I walked up the creek, in order to look for arbutus blossoms on a wooded knoll above the mill dam. We had been talking of them a few days before, and she had told me where they grew. I found the plants, indeed, pushing forth from under the fallen leaves, but the flowers were not yet developed. I gathered, instead, a bunch of club-moss, and took my seat upon an old stump, to listen to a blue-bird that sang from the willow thicket below. Something in the indolent quiet of the air reminded me of the shady glen at Honeybrook, and I thought of my cousin Penrose. How far away it seemed!

After a while I heard the sound of wheels ap-

proaching on the road from Cardiff, and a light, open waggon came into sight around the head of the knoll. I recognized Sep Bratton by his voice before I could distinguish his figure through the trees; and the dark blue drapery beside him—could it be?—yes, it really was—Amanda! The road passed some thirty or forty feet below me, but neither of them looked up in my direction.

“I’m going down to ‘The Buck,’” I heard Sep say, “but I’ll let you off at the turning. Or, do you want to stop and see Sue Yule?”

“Not to-day,” she answered. “But don’t stay long, Sep. You know, pa don’t like it.”

I listened no more, for a wild idea shot through my brain: I would cross the stream above the dam, hurry down on the opposite side, and intercept her! As soon as the vehicle disappeared, I bounded down the knoll, leaped the narrow channel, and stole as rapidly as possible, under cover of the thickets, towards the path she must take. I had plenty of time to recover my breath, for she was still standing beside the waggon, talking to Sep, who seemed

excited. I could hear the sound of his voice, but not the words.

At last, the sweet suspense terminated. Sep drove off, and I saw her gradually approach. Assuming a careless, sauntering air, which belied my inward perturbation, I emerged into view, walked a few steps, paused and looked around, seemed suddenly to perceive her, and then went forward to meet her.

Never had she looked so lovely. Her eyes expressed the same unchanging calm, harmonizing, as I thought, with the peaceful sky over us, but the air had brought a faint tinge to her cheek and ruffled a little the smoothness of her light-brown hair. I noticed, also, the steady, even measure of her step: if there had been harebells in her path, they would have risen up from it, elastic, as from the foot of the Lady of the Lake. She carried a dainty parasol, closed, and occasionally twirled it on her forefinger by an ivory ring at the end of the handle.

By the time we had exchanged greetings, and I had spoken of the arbutus and given her the club-moss, we passed the dam, and the road would soon

bring us to Bratton's gate. What I had to say must be said speedily.

"I am going to leave here, Miss Bratton."

"Inde-e-d! *So soon?*" she exclaimed, pausing in her walk, as I had done.

"Yes, I am going to New York. This may be my last walk with you. Let us go down the bank, as far as the old hemlock."

She seemed to hesitate. "I don't know," she said, at last. "Ma expects me." But while she spoke her steps had turned unconsciously, with mine, into the footpath.

"I want to tell you why I go," I continued. "Not because I have not been very happy here, but this is not the life for me. I must be an author, if I can—*something*, at any rate, to make my name honourable. I feel that I have some little talent, and if I am ambitious it is not for myself alone. I want to be worthy of my—friends."

"Oh, you are that already, Mr. Godfrey," said she.

"Do *you* think so, Miss Amanda?"

"Certainly."

Her voice expressed a positiveness of belief which was grateful, but, somehow, it did not encourage me to the final avowal. I had reached the brink, however, and must plunge now or never.

"If I should make myself a name, Miss Amanda," I went on, with broken, trembling voice, "it will be for your sake. Do you hope, now, that I shall succeed?"

She did not answer.

"I *must* tell you, before I go, that I love you—have loved you since we first met. I am presumptuous, I know, to ask for a return, but my heart craves it."

I paused. She had partly turned away her head, and seemed to be weeping.

"Tell me, you are not offended by what I have said," I entreated.

"No," she murmured, in a scarcely audible voice.

A wild hope sprang up in my heart. "You do not command me to forget you?"

"No," said she, as faintly as before.

"Then I may go and labour in the blessed knowledge that you think of me—that you will be faithful,

as I am faithful,—that—oh, Amanda! is it really true? Do you return my love?"

She had buried her face in her handkerchief. I gently put one arm around her waist and drew her towards me. Her head sank on my shoulder. "Speak, darling!" I entreated.

"I cannot," she whispered, hiding her face on my breast.

It was enough. A pulse of immeasurable joy throbbed in my heart, chimed wonderful music in my ears, and overflowed in waves of light upon the barren earth. The hill-tops were touched with a nimbus of glory, and far beyond them stretched a shining world, wherein the thorns burst into muffling roses, and the sharp flints of the highway became as softest moss. I loved, and I was beloved!

My arms closed around her. My face bent over her, and my lips sealed on hers the silent compact. I would not torture her pure, virginal timidity of heart. Her sweet and natural surrender spoke the words which her voice could not yet utter. I repeated my own declaration, with broken expressions

of rapture, now that my tongue was loosed and the courage of love had replaced its cowardice.

We reached the old hemlock, I knew not how, and sat down on the bank, side by side. I took and tenderly held her hand, which trembled a little as it lay in mine. Measuring her agitation, as woman, by mine, as man, I could readily make allowance for all that was passive in her attitude and words. I had burst upon her suddenly with my declaration, starting the innocent repose of her heart with the consciousness of love, and she must have time to become familiar with the immortal guest.

I explained to her my plans, so far as they possessed a definite shape. My success in literature I spoke of as a thing assured; one year, or, at most, two, would be sufficient to give me a sure position. *Then* I could boldly return and claim her as my precious reward—now, I must be satisfied with my blissful knowledge of her love, upon which I should rely as upon my own. My trust in her was boundless—if it were not so, I could not possibly bear the pangs of absence.

"We shall write to each other, shall we not, Amanda?" I asked. "Our hearts can still hold communion, and impart reciprocal courage and consolation. Promise me this, and I have nothing more to ask."

"If we can arrange it so that no one shall know," she answered. "I wouldn't have pa or ma find it out for *anything*. I'm sure they wouldn't hear of such a thing yet awhile. But we are both young, Mr. Godfrey——"

"Call me 'John,'" I murmured, in tender reproach.

She beamed upon me a sweet, frank smile, and continued: "We are so young, John, and we can wait and hope. I am sure if ever anybody was constant, you are. You must write, but not *very* often. If you could only send your letters so that pa or Sep could not see them! Sep would soon notice them, and you know how he talks!"

I was equally convinced of the propriety of keeping our attachment secret for the present. The difficulty in relation to correspondence had not

occurred to me before. It was a new proof of the interest she felt in the successful issue of our love.

"How can it be done?" said I. "We might send our letters through somebody else. There's Dan Yule, as honest a fellow as ever lived!"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "nobody must know what—what you have said to me!"

"He shall not know!" I protested. "I'll make up some story to explain the letters to Dan, and he's so simple-minded, he never suspects anything. Or, is there anybody else?"

No, she could think of no one, and she finally consented, although with reluctance, to the proposal. She now insisted on returning home, and I must, perforce, be satisfied with one more kiss before we emerged from the screen of the brook-trees. On reaching the road, we parted with a long clasp of hands, which said to me that her heart now recognized the presence of love, and would be faithful for ever.

I saw her twice again before my departure, but could only exchange a few stolen words, hot with

compressed emotion. Sorrow for the parting, and a joyous impatience to be away and at work for her sake, were strangely mingled in my heart; yet joy was most natural to my temperament, and it now poured through my days like a freshet, flooding over and drowning every lingering barrier of doubt or self-distrust.

When my school closed and my account with the directors was settled, I found myself in possession of nearly seventy dollars, as the net result of my winter's labours. I was also, had I known it, entitled to receive the annual interest on the sum in my uncle's hands; but I was too little alive to mere material matters to make any inquiry about it, and supposed that, in breaking away from his guardianship, I had debarred myself from all claims of the kind, until I should be my own master.

The arrangement with Dan Yule, with regard to my correspondence with Amanda, was easily made. My repeated declaration that it was mere friendly interchange of letters would have made any one else

suspicious, but Dan merely nodded his head, and said, "All right,—I'll 'tend to it."

The day of departure came, and, with many a hearty farewell and promise to revisit them, I took leave of the kind Yules, and commenced my journey into the world.


CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH I GO TO MARKET, BUT CANNOT SELL MY
WARES.

ON a cloudy afternoon, in the early part of April, behold me stepping ashore on the Courtland Street pier, from the Jersey City ferry-boat. Everything was new and bewildering. The rush of my fellow-passengers; the cries of the hackmen, brandishing their long whips; the crowd of carts, drays, and carriages, and the surge and swirl of one chaotic whirlpool of Noise, in the vortex of which I seemed to stand, stunned and confused my perceptions. After nearly losing the trunk in which my inestimable manuscripts were stowed, and paying an enormous price for its transfer to a thick-necked porter, who, I feared would knock me down before I could hand

him the money, I succeeded in finding quarters at Lovejoy's Hotel, an establishment which Sep Bratton had recommended to me. The officiating clerk, who struck me as a fellow of very obliging manners, gave me a front room on the fourth story, on learning that I should probably remain a week or two. I had neither an acquaintance nor a recommendatory letter to any person in the great city; but my funds, I supposed, were sufficient to support me for two or three months, and it was quite impossible that I should not find employment by that time.

I spent the remainder of my first day in wandering around the Park and up and down Broadway, feasting my eyes on the grandeur and novelty of everything I saw. I knew not which was most remarkable—the never-ending crowd that filled the chief thoroughfare, the irregular splendour of the shops, or the filthiness of the pavement. With the recollection of the un-deviating Philadelphian squares of brick bound in white marble in my mind, I could with difficulty comprehend that I had not passed into some foreign country. I was also favourably impressed with the



apparent friendliness of the inhabitants. Although the most of them passed me without even a glance, I was accosted in the Park by several gentlemen, who, probably recognizing the stranger in my air, asked me if I did not wish to see the city. Indeed, they were so importunate that I had some difficulty in declining their proffered services. Then, as evening came down on Broadway, I was quite surprised at receiving now and then a greeting from a superbly dressed lady, who certainly could never have seen me before. Some of them, in fact, seemed to be on the point of speaking to me; but as I feared they had mistaken me for some one else, I hurried away, slightly embarrassed.

I was so impatient to explore the field which I intended thenceforth to cultivate, that, as soon as I had taken breakfast next morning in the subterranean restaurant of the hotel, I set out for the office of "The Hesperian," which was near at hand, in Beekman Street. A small boy was just taking down the shutters. On my inquiring for Mr. Jenks, he informed me that that individual would be in at eleven

o'clock, when I might call again, if I wanted to see him. During the intervening three or four hours I wandered about, from the Battery to Canal Street, purchased and read two or three literary papers I had never heard of before, and supplied myself with several manuscripts, for Mr. Jenks's inspection.

On returning to "The Hesperian" office, I found a tall, thin-faced young man, with a black moustache, behind the counter. He was making up bundles of the magazine, and the number of copies on the shelves behind him excited my amazement. If this was Jenks, I thought, no doubt he was a young author like myself, and would receive me with the open arms of fraternal sympathy.

"Are you Mr. Jenks?" I asked.

"No: wish to see him particular?"

It was, therefore, only W. Timms, the "per."

"Anything *I* can do for you?" he repeated.

"Thank you," said I, "I should like to see Mr. Jenks himself, a moment, if he's in."

By way of answer, he twirled his left thumb towards the back of the office, giving a jerk of his

head in the same direction, as he tied another bundle.

Looking that way, I saw that one corner of the office was partitioned off from the rest, monopolizing more than half the light of the back-window. The door to this enclosure was open, and I could distinguish a large head, mounted on a square body, within.

Mr. Jenks was absorbed in the perusal of a newspaper, which he held before him, firmly grasped in both hands, as if about to tear it in twain. Before he looked up, I had time to take a rapid survey of his appearance. He was a man of forty-five, short, stout, grey, and partly bald; features keen, rigidly marked, and with a hard, material stamp—no gleam of taste or imagination anywhere. He evidently noticed my entrance, but finished his sentence or paragraph before consenting to be interrupted.

"Well?" said he, suddenly, tossing the paper to one side: "what is it?"

"Perhaps you remember," I mildly suggested, "writing to me about my poem of 'Leonora's

Dream,' which will be in 'The Hesperian' for May?"

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Godfrey."

"What's the handle to your 'Godfrey?'"

This question was not only rude but incomprehensible. I supposed, after a moment's reflection, that he must mean my business or vocation, and was about to explain, when he repeated—

"Your *given* name?"

I gave it.

He stretched forth his arm, took a folio volume from its upright niche over his desk, looked at its index, turned over the pages until he found what was probably a copy of the letter, and read, jerking out these words as he did so:

"Yes—Godfrey—May number—magazine for six months gratuitously." Here he slapped the volume shut, replaced it, and reiterated, "Well?"

"I have brought some other poems," I said. "Perhaps you might like some of them. I have come to New York to make literature my profession,

and should therefore expect to be paid for my articles. Here is a long narrative poem, which I think my best; it is a romantic subject—'Ossian on the Hill of Morven.' Would you like to look at it?'

He took the proffered manuscript, tossed over leaf after leaf to see its length, and then addressed me with unnecessary energy: "Young man, this may be apples of gold in pictures of silver, for anything I know,—but it won't do for me. It would make ten pages of the magazine, and four a month is as much as I can allow for poetry. I have a bushel-basket full of contributions which I can't use. The public want variety. It's a good thing to encourage young writers, and we reckon to do our share,—but business is business."

Very much discouraged, yet unwilling to give up hope of literary occupation, I asked whether it would not be possible for me to furnish articles of another character.

"You're hardly up to what I want," said Mr. Jenks. "I'd like to have a few short, sentimental stories, to

piece out with now and then,—something light and airy” (here he made a spiral upward movement with his forefinger,) “such as women like to read,—with a good deal of millinery in them. It takes practice just to hit the mark in these things.”

“I might try, Mr. Jenks,” I suggested.

“As you please. But I make no engagements beforehand, except with standard authors. What have you there?”

I handed him the remaining sheets, which contained various brief lyrics, mostly of an amatory character. He whirled them over in the same rapid way, reading a line here and there, and then returned them, together with my “Ossian.”

“One or two things there might do, if I wasn’t overstocked,” he said. Besides, you’re not known, and your name would be no advantage to the magazine. Get a little reputation, young man, before you try to make your living by literature. Write a sonnet on a railroad accident, or something else that everybody will read, or have one of your singable poems set to music and made fashionable, and then

I'll talk to you. You can't expect me to pay, while there's a young and rising genius on every bush, and to be had for the picking."

As he said this, he turned short around to his desk, and began opening a pile of letters. Nothing was left to me but to retreat, in rather a disordered manner. W. Timms gave a significant glance at the manuscripts in my hand as I passed out through the store, and I hastened to hide them in the breast-pocket of my coat. I will not conceal the fact that I was deeply humiliated, not so much because my poems were refused, as because I had voluntarily come down to the plane where I must submit to be tested by coarse, material standards. I felt now for the first time that there is an Anteros, as well as an Eros, in literature, and the transition from one to the other was too sudden to be made without a shock. I began to fear that what I believed to be Inspiration would accomplish little towards the furtherance of my plans, unless it were allied to what I knew to be Policy ;—in other words, that my only chance of success with "The Hesperian" lay in

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writing one of the short, airy, *millinery* tales, which Mr. Jenks could use "to piece out with."

The idea grew less repulsive as I brooded over it. I found my mind spontaneously at work, contriving characters and situations, almost before I knew it. By night I had well-nigh decided to make the attempt. Meanwhile, I recognized that there was a grain of truth amid the harshness of Mr. Jenks's concluding words. I should certainly have but little chance of obtaining employment unless my name were known to some extent. "Selim," of course, must be dropped, and "John Godfrey" stand forth boldly as the father of his own angelic progeny; but even then, I was not sure that the reputation would immediately follow. I might plunge into the golden flood as soon as I was able to swim, but how could I learn the art on the dry land of poverty and obscurity? One of the suggestions struck me as being plausible. I knew how eagerly songs are passed from voice to voice through the country, and music seemed a fitting adjunct to some of my shorter lyrics. If, for instance, that commencing "I pine for thee

at night and morn" were wedded to some fair and tender melody, it alone might raise me in a short time from the darkness of my estate.

In the afternoon, therefore, I made another venture. Not deterred by the crossed banjos in the window of a music store, and the lithograph of Christy's Minstrels, in costume, on the title-page of a publication, I entered and offered my finer wares. I was received with more courtesy than at "The Hesperian" office, but the result was the same. The publisher dealt rather in quadrilles, polkas, and Ethiopian melodies, than songs of a sentimental character. He read my poems, which he pronounced very sweet and tender, and thought they might be popular—but more depended on the air than on the words, and it was rather out of his line. His politeness encouraged me to use a little persuasion, yet without effect. He was sorry, etc.—under other circumstances, etc.—and I felt, finally, that his smooth manner covered a fixed decision. I went home towards evening, with the manuscripts still in my pocket.

It is useless to deny that my hopes were somewhat dashed by the day's experience. Already the fragrance of life began to drift away, and the purple bloom to fade. Even a poet, I saw (and whether I were one or not, this was the only character in which I had presented myself), met with a cold and questioning reception from the world. Whatever I might achieve must be the spoil, not the gift, of Fate: I must clench for a blow the hand which I had stretched out with an open palm. All my petty local triumphs, my narrow distinctions, my honest friendships, were become absolutely nothing. I wore no badge that could be recognized, but stood naked before a world that would test every thew of my frame before it clothed me with its mantle of honour.

Physical fatigue and the reaction from my first causeless yet inevitable excitement added to the gloom of the mood that fell upon me. Let no one tell me that there are natures so steeled and strung to their purpose that they never know discouragement. Some, indeed, may always turn a brave face to their fellow-beings; a few, perhaps, might sooner


die than betray a flagging courage ; but no high prize was ever reached by a brain unacquainted with doubt.

I read something—I forget what—to escape from myself, and went early to bed. There, I knew, I should find a certain balm for all moral abrasions. With each article of clothing I laid aside a heavy thought, and when my body dipped into the air as into some delicate, ethereal fluid, every material aspect of life drifted away like fragments of a wreck and left me the pure sensation of existence. Then I sank into my bed, as some wandering spirit might sink to rest for a while, upon a denser cloud, cool with dew, yet warm with rosy sunshine. Every joint and muscle fell into slack, exquisite repose, or, if sometimes a limb stretched itself forth with an exploring impulse, it was simply to enjoy more fully the consciousness of its freedom. My breast grew light and my heart beat with an even, velvety throb ; the restless thoughts laid themselves, one by one, to sleep, and gentle, radiant fancies whispered from the pillow. In that sensation lay for me almost the only pure and perfect blending of body and spirit ; their

natural enmity forgotten, their wavering bounds of rule softly obliterated, they clasped each other in a brief embrace of love.

Wretched, thrice wretched is the man whose bed has ceased to be a blessing, whose pillow no longer seems, while his eyes close with a murmured word of prayer, the arm of God, tenderly upholding his head during the helplessness of sleep !

In the morning I put on a portion of my trouble with my clothes. I was yet without a moral disinfectant, and the rustling of the manuscripts in my pocket brought back some of yesterday's disappointment. I had no intention, however, of giving up the struggle ; it had become a sort of conscience with me to perform what I had once decided upon. The obligation was not measured by the importance of the act. I had half made up my mind to attempt a short "millinery" story for "The Hesperian;" but, even if this should fail, there were other literary papers and periodicals in the city. My interview with the music dealer had left a more agreeable impression than that with Mr. Jenks. Generalising



from single experiences, as a young man is apt to do, I suspected that publishers of songs were a more courteous and refined class of men than publishers of magazines. I would therefore first exhaust this class of chances.

After some search, I discovered another music store in the lower part of Broadway. There was a guitar in the window, instead of banjos, and the title-pages represented young ladies gazing on the moon, bunches of forget-me-nots, and affectionate pairs in crimson gondolas. This looked promising, and I entered with a bold step. On either side ran a counter, heaped with squares of music sheets, but nobody was in attendance. Beyond this, an open space, in which pianos stood, and there I saw two gentlemen, one seated and playing a lively air, the other standing near him. As I advanced towards them, the former looked up from his performance, addressed me in a sharp, shrill voice, with—"Wait a minute, sir!" and went on playing.

I leaned against the end of the counter, and heard what followed.

"This is the way it should be played," said the performer, "quite a different movement, you see, from yours. I'll sing two or three lines, to show you what I mean."

Thereupon, clearing his throat, he sang, with a voice somewhat cracked and husky—

"When—I-ee am dying, the angels will come
On swift wings a-flying, to carry me home."

"There!" he continued, "that's about the time I want, but I see you haven't enough syllables for the notes. I had to say 'a-flying' to stretch the line out. There's another wanted in the first, after 'when.' I'll put in another 'when,' and you'll see how much better it will go, and faster :

"'Whenwhen I am dying, the angels will come'"—

"If you please," said the other gentleman, who, I now saw, was a young, fresh-faced, attractive person, "I will show how I meant the song to be sung."

He took his seat at the piano, and, with a weak but clear and tuneful voice, sang the same lines,

but much more slowly and with a different accentuation.

"Oh, that won't do, that will *never* do!" exclaimed the first, almost pushing him from the stool. "It wouldn't be popular at all; it's quite doleful. More spirit, Mr. Swansford! Listen again, you *must* see that my idea is the best, only you should change the words, and have just as many syllables as notes." Thereupon he sang, to a galloping accompaniment, faster than ever—

"Whenwhen I am dying, the angelswillcome
On swift wingswings flying, to carrymehome."

The young man looked dejected, and I could see that he was not in the least convinced. "If you insist upon having it so, Mr. Kettlewell," said he, "I must re-write the music."

"I have nothing against the music, Mr. Swansford," said the publisher, as I now conjectured him to be; "it's only the *time*. You might, perhaps, put a little more brilliant fingering in the accompaniment—it would be more popular. The more showy music

is, the better it sells. Think over the matter, while I attend to this gentleman."

He rose from the piano and came towards me. He was a small man, with lively grey eyes, a hooked nose, and a shrivelled throat. "Business" was written upon his face no less distinctly than on that of Mr. Jenks, though in different hieroglyphics. He was easier to encounter, but, I feared, more difficult to move. I told him in a few words what I wanted, and offered him my lyrics for inspection. They began already to seem a little battered in my eyes; they were no longer wild flowers, fresh with dew, but wilted vegetables in a market basket.

"Hm—hm," said he, "the words are good in their way, though it isn't much matter about *them*, if the subject is popular and the air is taking. I don't often do this sort of thing, Mr. ——" ?

"Godfrey," I remarked.

"Ah, Mr. Godfrey. The name seems familiar. What songs of yours are in circulation?"

I was obliged to confess that none of my effusions

had yet been sung. Always detected as a beginner ! It is very likely that, for a single second, I may have felt a temptation to lie.

"That makes a difference," he said. "It's risky. But if you'll leave them I'll show them to my composer, and see what he thinks. How much a piece do you want for them ? I always like to know terms in advance."

Thankful not to have received a downright rebuff, I informed him that I was ignorant of the usual remuneration, but would be satisfied with whatever he should think them worth.

"Well," he observed, "I mostly get common, sentimental songs for a dollar. There's Spenser G. Bryan, to be sure, *he* has five dollars, but then his songs are always fashionable, and the sale makes up the difference to me. You couldn't expect to compete with a Spenser G. Bryan, so I suppose a dollar would be about the right thing."

As he paused, awaiting an answer, I modestly signified my assent, although the sum seemed to me terribly insignificant. At that rate I should have to

write three hundred and sixty-five songs in a year, in order barely to live! After being notified that I might call again in eight or ten days, to learn the composer's decision, I took leave of Mr. Kettlewell.

This transaction gave me at least a momentary courage. It promised to be a stepping-stone, if of the smallest and most slippery character. There was also this pitiful consolation—that I was not the only aspiring young author struggling to rise out of obscurity. I could not doubt that the young man—Mr. Swansford—had come on an errand similar to mine. He was perhaps a little further advanced—had commenced his career, but not as yet emerged from its first obstructions. I longed to make his acquaintance, and therefore lingered near the place. In a few minutes he issued from the store, with a roll of paper in his hand. His head was bent, and his whole air expressed discouragement: one hand crushed the paper it grasped, while the other was clenched as it hung by his side.

Presently he seemed to become magnetically aware

of my gaze, and looked up. I noticed now that his skin was quite transparent, and there were dark shades under his eyes. He wore a very silky moustache, and had a soft, straggling tuft on his chin ; yet, even with these masculine indications, his face was delicate as a young girl's. I recognized a kinship of some sort between us, and, fancying that I read a similar recognition in his eyes, I said to him, without further prelude—

"You sang the song correctly."

"Did I not?" he exclaimed. "You heard how he butchered it;—was ever anything so stupid and so profane? But he won't hear of anything else; I must change it. You offered him songs, too, I noticed. Do you compose?"

"Only words—not music."

"Then you can only half understand what I must put up with. You see I always write the melody first: it's more to me than the poetry. If I knew a poet who understood music, and could give its sentiment truly in words, I should not try to write them myself."

"I wish you had seen the songs I just left with your publisher!" I eagerly exclaimed. "But I have others in my trunk. Will you come to my room and look over them, Mr. Swansford?"

He accepted the invitation, and in the course of an hour or two we became very well acquainted indeed. We interchanged biographies, and were delighted to find here and there a point of resemblance. He was a native of a small town in Connecticut, where his parents—persons of limited means—still lived. He had already been a year in the city, studying music on a fund derived from his moderate savings as teacher of a singing-class at home. He was four or five years older than myself, and thus possessed a little more experience of the ways of the world; but he never had, and never would, overcome his distaste for the hard, practical materialism which he encountered on every side. A few of his songs had been published, and had attained a moderate success, without bringing him much remuneration. He was now far enough advanced in his musical studies, however, to give lessons, and should rely upon them

for support while elaborating his great musical designs. I dimly felt, in the course of our conversation, the presence of a purer and loftier ideal than my own. The first half-unconscious contrast of our natures presented him sublimed and etherealized beside the sensuous love of Beauty which was my strongest characteristic.


We parted on good terms with each other—almost as friends. That evening I returned his visit, at his boarding-house in the triangular region between the Bowery and East Broadway. He had an attic room, with a dormer-window looking out on a realm of narrow back-yards, divided by board walls, which had received such a nap from the weather that they resembled felt rather than wood. A bed, cottage-piano, and chest of drawers, so filled up the room that there was barely space for a little table squeezed into the hollow of the window, and two chairs. He had no stove, and could only obtain a partial warmth in winter by leaving his door open to catch the atmosphere from below. Above his bed hung lithographic heads of Mendelssohn and Beethoven. Poor

and starved as was the aspect of the room, there was nevertheless something attractive in its atmosphere. It was not beautiful by day, but was admirably adapted to the midnight isolation of genius.

CHAPTER III.

CONCERNING MY ENTRANCE INTO MRS. VERY'S BOARD-
ING-HOUSE, AND VARIOUS OTHER MATTERS.

My acquaintance with Swansford, at that period of my fortunes, was a piece of good luck for which I have ever since been thankful. I derived a certain sort of consolation—selfish, no doubt, but very natural—from the knowledge that his circumstances were scarcely better than my own, his future equally uncertain. Without a friendly acquaintance, whose respect I desired to retain, I should probably have succumbed to the repeated rebuffs I experienced, and given up my chosen career in despair. The thought of Amanda was a powerful stimulant, it was true, but the breadth of New Jersey divided her



from me. Here, however, was an ever-present eye which must not be allowed to discover my flagging courage. I must make good to him my first boast and counterfeit a certain amount of energy, until the force of habit transformed it into the genuine article. The efforts I made were not without their results in my nature, and, since I have come to understand myself better, I am reconciled to that mixture of pride and vanity to which I can now trace so many of my actions.

During the succeeding week I made many additional trials, persevering after each failure, finally, from a curiosity to assure myself that my original plans were indeed futile. One or two literary editors accepted a poem from me as an unpaid contribution, but no one was willing to purchase. My only prospect of earning a trifle dwindled down to the short "millinery" story, which I completed and carried to Mr. Jenks, who promised to read it "in the course of the week." Mr. Kettlewell's composer had no objections to make in regard to the songs submitted to his inspection; they were smooth and senti-

mental, he said, and if he had time, he might marry some of them to his immortal music; but he was now busily engaged in preparing two new quadrilles and a polka.

I confided these experiences to Swansford, who did not seem to be in the least surprised; so I, also, pretended to take them as a matter of course. Meanwhile, my little stock of money was beginning to go, and prudence advised me to enter upon a more economical mode of living. About this time the front attic in Swanford's boarding-house became vacant, and I considered myself fortunate in being able to secure it, with board, for three dollars and a half per week. Swansford took me down to a dark parlour on the first floor, and summoned Mrs. Very, who kept the establishment. It was a splendid apartment; the carpet-pattern was of immense size, and the furniture real mahogany and horse-hair. I was obliged to wait some time before the appearance of Mrs. Very—a tall, middle-aged lady with an aquiline nose. A cap with crimson ribbons and streamers was thrown upon her head, concealing

to some extent the frowziness of her hair, and a heavy velvet cape on her shoulders was so confused in its fastenings that one side was an inch higher than the other. In the dim atmosphere, nevertheless, she was rather an imposing presence, and suggested to me at once the idea of an unfortunate duchess.

Swansford performed the ceremony of introduction, stating my wish to become the occupant of the vacant room. The lady bent her piercing eyes upon me and took a silent survey of my form.

"I have not given out the room yet," she remarked. "Miss Dunlap spoke to me of her cousin wanting it, but I didn't promise positive. I wish to form an agreeable family, and would rather be vacant for a week or two than have them that don't seem rightly to belong to our domestic circle. There are now three ladies and two gentlemen, you know, Mr. Swansford; so it would seem proper for me to take another gentleman. Mr. Godfrey, I suppose, would not be likely to have lots of visitors till midnight or two o'clock in the morning?"

"Oh, no!" I exclaimed. "I scarcely know anybody in New York except Mr. Swansford."

"*That* would be a recommendation," Mrs. Very reflectingly observed. "Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer having the room under you; they're the oldest members of my family, and stand by me faithful. Them that know me generally do. Our circle is the best in Hester Street, and I often have competition for my vacancies. I'm mostly full all summer, when other people, who are not particular as to genteel boarders, are half empty."

Mrs. Very finally informed me that she would make up her mind that evening, and dismissed us with a stately salutation. I should have gone away in great doubt, had not Swansford whispered to me, at the door, "That's always her way of talking. She has taken you already."

This proved to be the case. The next morning one of Lovejoy's porters followed me up Chatham Street with my trunk, and I took possession of the coveted attic. Mrs. Very's residence was a narrow three-story house of brick, with wooden steps, and a

small platform before the door. This was called "the stoop." The house was two or three blocks removed from the noise of the Bowery, and its neighbourhood were an aspect both of quiet and decay. The street was rarely cleaned, and its atmosphere was generally flavoured with the smells arising from boxes of ashes and kitchen refuse, which stood on the sidewalks awaiting removal. Most of the houses were only of two stories, some of them of wood, and Mrs. Very's thus received a certain distinction. Whether or not the hall was swept, the brass plate on the door, with her name, was always brightly scoured. Not far off, on the opposite side of the street, there was a blind alley, leading to some hidden cluster of tenements, whence issued swarms of dirty, ragged, and savage children.

The room to which I was conducted was almost a fac-simile of Swansford's. It commanded a view of the opposite side of the street, and overlooked the mysteries of several second floors. The absence of a piano made it seem more spacious ; its appointments, such as they were, were complete ; and, indeed, I

was not so accustomed to luxury as to find the least fault with them. The wall was papered grey, with a large blue pattern, and there was a faded and frayed ingrain carpet on the floor. A very small stand of pine-wood, with a drawer for soap, held the wash-bowl and pitcher; the thin little towel was suspended from a nail. I had, further, an old chest with three drawers, surmounted by a square foot of mirror, and, as Swansford had dropped a hint that I was a young man of literary habits, Mrs. Very considerably added a little table, with one shrunk leg, which I steadied by means of folded newspapers. The bed was smaller and harder than any I had before occupied. The change from the spacious beds of Berks County was like that from a pond to a bath-tub, and I could no longer stretch myself in all directions with impunity. It was symbolic of the contraction which my hopes and my plans had suffered.

Swansford had obtained two or three pupils, at moderate terms, in the vicinity, and these, with his own studies, kept him employed the greater part of

the day ; but I had nothing to do except write and keep my eyes open for any chance that might turn up. When we met for dinner at five o'clock—which hour had been chosen by Mrs. Very, as she informed me, on account of Mr. Mortimer, who was assistant teller in one of the Bowery banks—I was formally presented to my fellow-boarders. Mr. Mortimer was a grave, middle-sized man of forty, whose authority in that genteel circle was evidently only less than the landlady's. The outward projection of his right ear-flap, and a horizontal groove in his short hair, showed that the pen had grown to be a member of his body. His wife, a lady some five years younger, was taller than himself, though in dignity of deportment she harmonized fully. Her neck was a very stiff prolongation of her spine, and she had a way of bending her head the least in the world when she spoke to you, as much as to say, "I will subdue my feelings and condescend to speak." She was always dressed in dark silk, and her skirts rustled a great deal. Even in my attic, whenever I heard a shrill, sweeping noise, like the wind through a dead thorn-

bush, I knew that Mrs. Mortimer was passing up or down stairs.

The two remaining ladies were Miss Tatting, and her niece, Miss Dunlap. The former kept a trimming-store in Grand Street, in which the latter officiated as her assistant. There was less difference between the ages of the ladies than their relationship would indicate. It was difficult, in fact, to decide upon this question, especially in the case of the former; she might have been twenty-five and old-looking, or carrying forty summers with an air of youth. The necessity of unbending to her customers had given her an easy, familiar manner, which seemed occasionally to shock the delicate sensibilities of Mrs. Mortimer. Though comparatively uncultivated, she had a good deal of natural shrewdness, and was well skilled in the use of her tongue. Her niece was cast in a similar yet softer mould. A vein of sentiment, somewhat weak and faded now, to be sure, ran through her composition. But she was an amiable creature, and I have not the heart to dwell upon this little weakness, even if it had been more grotesquely developed.

When Mrs. Very took her seat at the head of the table (Mr. Mortimer facing her at the foot), her face was still flushed from her superintendence in the kitchen, but her hair had been rapidly compelled to order, a silk cape was substituted for the velvet one, and correctly fastened. A small black girl stood at her elbow.

No grace was said, although the landlady waited until Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer had lifted their eyes from their plates. Then she questioned each of us in turn, "Shall I send you some of the soup to-day?" After the soup, Mr. Mortimer carved a piece of roast beef, while Mrs. Very addressed herself to a diminutive remainder of cold ham. Potatoes, turnips, and spinage boiled in an uncut, tangled mass, completed the repast.

Conversation rose as appetite declined, and after various commonplaces had been discussed, Mrs. Very suddenly exclaimed, "Who do you think I met, coming home from market, Mrs. Mortimer?"

The lady addressed slightly curved her neck and answered, in the mild voice of propriety, "I'm sure I don't know."

"Her!"

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Mortimer.

"You don't mean Mrs. Gamble, now, do you?" asked Miss Tatting, suspending her fork in the air.

"Mrs. Gamble!" echoed Mrs. Very, with an air of triumph. "They were walking together, and there was no mistaking *her* at once. She seems to carry her head high enough, for all the trouble, and I shouldn't wonder if they'd cave in, though they *have* said he should never darken their doors. I've asked them to come around to tea some evening."

"Will they come?" all three of the ladies exclaimed at once.

"They promised positive they would, but couldn't name the day certain. He doesn't look a bit down about it, I must say. Perhaps *they'll* come round when they find it only hurts themselves. I was in such a hurry that I couldn't ask many questions."

This theme was pursued by Mrs. Very's domestic circle with lively interest. I gradually discovered that Mr. Gamble was my own predecessor in the attic-room, and at the genteel board where I now sat.

The occasion of his leaving was his marriage with the daughter of a prosperous shoe-dealer, who was opposed to the match on account of Mr. Gamble being only clerk for a soap-boiling firm. The young lady, however, had a will of her own, and boldly married, in defiance of her parents. She had not returned home after the ceremony, but sent for her wardrobe, which the angry father refused to give up. The happy couple made a short wedding trip to the bridegroom's relatives in the country, and were just returning to the city when Mrs. Very was so fortunate as to intercept them. Of course, everybody at the table espoused the cause of Mr. and Mrs. Gamble, the former being still claimed as a member of the family. It was well known that he would have remained, but for the lack of proper accommodations, and I fancy Mrs. Mortimer would have willingly seen a vacancy made for the romantic pair, by the removal of Miss Tatting and her niece.

By the time our dessert of rice-pudding was reached, this topic had been quite exhausted, and the conversation became mixed and lively. I talked across the




table to Swansford about a story which had just appeared in one of the Philadelphia magazines, while Mrs. Very's and Mr. Mortimer's remarks crossed ours at right angles. Miss Dunlap listened to us, and her aunt was occupied with the stately Mrs. Mortimer, apparently on the mysteries of dress, for I caught such phrases as "a great demand for chenilles," "corn-colour coming up again," etc., etc.

The same scene repeated itself every day, with slight variations. We had veal sometimes, instead of beef, and tapioca instead of rice. Mrs. Mortimer walked in Broadway, and often found subjects for short, decorous, condescending narratives. Swansford was questioned about his musical compositions, and variously advised, Miss Dunlap hoping that he would write an opera, while Mrs. Mortimer thought an oratorio would be much more elevated. The boarding-houses of Bevins and Applegate, in the same street, were discussed with acrid satire, in which Mrs. Very heartily joined. In short, the latter's effort to create an harmonious domestic circle was entirely

successful, so far as the satisfaction of the members with themselves was concerned.

I had been an inmate of the house about a week when I achieved my first success. Mr. Jenks, after postponing his decision and keeping me on thorns for three days longer, finally made up his mind to accept my millinery story, with the proviso that I changed the denouement, and, instead of an elopement, reconciled Ianthe's parents to the match. "The Hesperian," he said, was a family magazine, and designed to contain nothing which could plant an unconventional or rebellious thought in the breast of infancy. There had been several elopements in the previous stories, and he had already heard complaints. The article was pleasantly written, and he thought I might succeed in that line, provided I took care to "give a moral turn" to my sketches. What could I do? Swansford's experience with Kettlewell now came home to me with a vengeance, but I grinned (I am afraid I came very near cursing), and endured. For the story thus mutilated I was to receive five dollars after its appearance. I immediately commenced


another story, in which the characters were absolute angels and devils, winding up by assigning the former to Paradise and the latter to Hades. The moral of that, I thought, would be plain enough.

I now wrote a page to Dan Yule, stating that I was well, and hoped he was, with a few little particulars of my life, which I thought would interest him. Inclosed was a letter of sixteen pages for Amanda, in which the joys of love, the sorrows of absence, and the longings for that assured future which would bring us together again, were mixed in equal proportions. I know that my mind, released from the restraints imposed by publishers of moral and millinery tales, poured itself out freely and delightedly to the one ear which would hear me aright. It was my first letter, and I doubt whether her joy in receiving it was greater than mine in writing it.

Swansford knew nothing, as yet, of my attachment. Although we had become earnest friends, I could not open to him this chamber of my heart. Our talk was mostly upon our "kindred arts," as we styled them. I was even more desirous than he to supply

the words for his own melodies, and we made, one day, a double experiment. I gave him my last, and, of course, sweetest song, taking in return a pensive, plaintive air which he had just written, and set myself to express it in words as he mine in music. The result was only partially satisfactory. I reproduced, tolerably, the sentiment of the air, but I was ignorant of the delicate affinity between certain vowel sounds and certain musical notes—whence, though my lines were better than Swansford's, they were not half so easy to sing. This discovery led to a long conversation and an examination of the productions of various popular song-writers, the result of which was an astonishing conviction of my own ignorance.

I should have enjoyed this vagabond life thoroughly, nevertheless, but for the necessity which impelled me to secure some sort of provision for the future. I saw no way of reaching the Olympian society of the celebrated authors, or in otherwise dragging myself out of the double insignificance (compared with my position in Upper Samaria), into which I had fallen. Week after week went by, yielding me nothing but



an accumulation of manuscripts. I was obliged to procure a few better articles of clothing than I had brought with me, and this made a great hole in my funds. Indeed, with strict economy, they would barely last another month. Many a night I lay awake, revolving plans which brightened and grew rosy with the excitement of my brain; but, when morning came, the colour had faded out of them, and they seemed the essence of absurdity.

I was not devoid of practical faculties, but they had hitherto lain dormant, or been suppressed by the activity of the tastes and desires first awakened. I now began to find a wide vibration in my nature, between the moods of night and day; but their reciprocal action hastened my development. Still, I was at heart a boy, and troubled with a boy's restless impatience. I had no suspicion of the many and the inevitable throes which men as well as planets must endure, before chaos is resolved into form.

CHAPTER IV.

DESCRIBING MR. WINCH'S RECONCILIATION BALL AND
ITS TWO FORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES.

A FORTNIGHT after my introduction into Mrs. Very's domestic circle, Mr. and Mrs. Gamble redeemed their promise of coming to tea. The important event was announced at dinner on the previous day, and little else was spoken of until the appointed evening came. Mrs. Very informed us, with a solemn air, that we should assemble in the parlour instead of the basement dining-room : Mr. Gamble, as a member of her family, should be treated just as well as if he were her own brother ("son," I thought, would have been more appropriate), and the Winches should see what *her* behaviour was, as compared with theirs. They

might hurt her, if they liked: thank Fortune, her house was well known, and her boarders stood by her faithful.

"Yes," said Mr. Mortimer, with becoming gravity, "we must give Gamble a lift, now he's in trouble. Old Winch keeps his deposits in our bank, but I won't let that stand between me and what's right."

Mrs. Mortimer bent her stiff neck assentingly.

We were all seated in the parlour when the bell rang. Mrs. Very triumphantly issued into the hall and received the interesting couple, while we waited in silent expectation until the usual rustling up and down stairs should announce that the bride had adjusted her toilette. Then she entered, dark, full, and voluptuous in her form, and resplendent in a dead golden-coloured silk. Mr. Gamble, beside her, dwindled into a very commonplace individual, as he no doubt was. He was cordially, if somewhat stiffly, congratulated—for the Very idea of gentility was too conscious of itself to be easy—by his old friends, and the bride received the same with an added tint of gracious deference. She, however, under-

stood the interest of her position, and determined to enjoy it.

"Oh, I have heard of you all, from Harry!" she exclaimed, shaking hands with everybody, even myself, to whom she said,—“So, *you* have fallen heir to his room! Don't you let him in, if he ever repents of his bargain and wants to come back!”


Then she cast a loving, mischievous glance at her husband, who was radiant with pride at the gay fascination of her manner. “Now you see, Laura, from what company you have taken me away,” he said, with a semicircular bow which embraced Mrs. Very, Mrs. Mortimer, and Miss Tatting. “It was a hard struggle, I assure you.” And he heaved a mock sigh.

“You can't make us believe that,” said Miss Tatting, tapping him on the arm with a large green fan.

This is a fair specimen of the conversation during tea. It was not very intellectual, I admit; but it was quite a pleasant and entertaining change from our usual routine, and I enjoyed it amazingly. Mrs. Gamble was the life of the company. Being privi-

leged to give the tone of the evening, she did so with a will, and it was astonishing how much fun and laughter we produced from the most trifling themes. After her departure we were all loud in our expressions of admiration. It was decided, without a dissenting voice, that Mrs. Very's family circle would henceforth espouse the cause of the Gambles against the Winches.

About the middle of May, however, we were surprised by a rumour that the unnatural father had been led, either by policy or penitence, to relent, and that Mr. Gamble would shortly give up his situation in the soap-boiling establishment, to take an important post in Winch & Son's shoe-store. I know not whether Mrs. Very or the Mortimers were most flattered by this news: either party was sure that their countenance of the match had something to do with it. The climax to the general satisfaction was given by a package of notes which came, a few days afterwards, stating that Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Winch requested the pleasure of our company, on Thursday evening, at their residence, No. 322, Columbia Street.



[There was no difficulty in comprehending the nature of this event. Mr. Winch, having made up his mind to do the proper thing, intended to do it in the proper way, crushing gossip and family estrangement with the same blow. The temptation to attend the ball was too great to be resisted, and our inveterate hostility to the Winches came therefore to a sudden end.

When the evening arrived, we marched across the Grand-Street region, like a well-ordered family, Mrs. Very taking Mr. Mortimer's other arm, Miss Tatting Swansford's, and Miss Dunlap mine. A waiter, in white cotton gloves, whom I at first took for Winch junior, received us at the door, and ushered us upstairs to our respective dressing-rooms. Here were various other gentlemen, giving the finishing touch to their scented and glistening hair, and drawing on their new white kids. I imitated their movements, and tried my best to appear at ease and *au fait* to such occasions. When we descended to the parlour, Mr. Gamble came forward at once to greet us, and presented us with a respectful flourish to the obdu-

rate Winch *père*, who looked imposing in his blue coat with gilt buttons, buff Marseilles vest, and high white cravat. Mrs. Winch, dark, like her daughter, but shrivelled, which the latter was not, stood beside her lord, in black satin, evidently as happy as she could well be. The reconciliation, in fact, was supposed to be mainly her work.

We, as the son-in-law's friends, received conspicuous attention. Mrs. Gamble welcomed us like old acquaintances, and glided hither and thither with a lazy grace, as she strove to stir up and blend us with the other social elements of which the party was composed. This was not difficult in the case of my companions, and I resolved, in my ignorance of New York habits, to imitate them in everything. Accordingly, when Mrs. Gamble asked me if I should not like to be introduced to a young lady "of a literary turn," in whom I might discover "a congenial spirit," I acquiesced with enthusiasm, and soon found myself seated beside Miss Levi, a remarkable girl, with very black hair and eyebrows, and a prominent nose. Her forehead was so low, that, at a distance,

it looked like a white stripe over her eyebrows. She wore a dress which not merely showed her shoulders, but the upper undulations of her bosom; so that, whenever she bent forward, my gaze fell into a wonderful twilight region, which caused me to blush with the sense of having committed an impropriety.

"Mrs. Gamble tells me you are a poet, Mr. Godfrey," she said. (How had Mrs. Gamble learned that so soon?)

"Oh, I write a little," I modestly answered.

"How charming! I doat on poetry. Won't you repeat to me some of yours?"

I was rather taken aback at this proposition; but, taking it for granted that Miss Levi knew the ways of society better than myself, I repeated to her, in a low voice, and with some confusion, the last song I had written.

"It is beautiful!" she exclaimed, fixing her large, jet-black eyes upon me with a power I could scarcely endure to meet. "Beautiful! You must have been inspired—does she live in the city?"

"Who?" I asked, feeling that my face sufficiently betrayed me.

"How can you ask 'who,' Mr. Godfrey? Ah! you poets are a sad class of men. I'm afraid you are all inconstant; tell me, do you think you can be faithful to her?"

Some imp prompted me to reply, "I never had any doubt of it before this evening."

"Oh, Mr. Godfrey!" she exclaimed, "that's too bad! Now I know you are not in earnest." But she looked at me very much as if she would like me to insist that I was. I could not carry the farce any further, so endeavoured to change the subject by asking, "Do you write, Miss Levi?"

"I ought not to tell you," she answered; "but I can *feel*."

Our talk was here interrupted, probably on the brink of sweet intellectual disclosures, by the sound of the piano. It was Swansford, whom Mrs. Gamble had persuaded to favour the company with one of his compositions. He gave, to my surprise, the very song I had just repeated to Miss Levi, with a tender

and beautiful melody of his own. This generosity touched me,—for generosity it really was, when he might have sung his own words. He looked towards me and smiled, at the close, seeing my gratitude in my eyes.

Shortly afterwards I was released from Miss Levi, who took Swansford's place, and sang, "You'll Remember Me," in a piercing voice. Various songs of the same class followed; and, even with my own uncultured taste, I could easily understand the look of distress on Swansford's face.

The double parlour was crowded; and it was not long before the songs gave way to the music of two violins and a harp, stationed under Mr. Winch's portrait, between the front windows. The carpets had been taken up, so that everybody expected dancing. Having a slight familiarity with quadrilles, from the "gatherings" in Upper Samaria, I secured Miss Dunlap, as the partner with whom I should be least embarrassed, and, after that, was kept well supplied through the efforts of the Gambles and young Winch. When the waltz came, I withdrew to a corner and

watched the softly whirling pairs, conspicuous among whom were the hero and heroine of the evening. It was delightful to see the yielding grace with which she trusted herself to his arm, drifting like a swan on the eddies of a stream, while her hands lay clasped on his shoulder, and her large, dark eyes lifted themselves to his. Happy pair! If I were he, and she were Amanda!—but I ground the thought between my teeth, and stifled the impatience of my heart.

Towards midnight we marched down to a room in the basement, where a superb supper was arranged. Mrs. Very supposed that it must have cost fifty dollars, and she was capable of forming an opinion. There were oysters, salads, patés, jellies, brandy-peaches, and bonbons, with tea, coffee, ices, and champagne. I now discovered that I had a natural taste for these luxuries, and was glad to see that Swansford partook of them with a relish equal to my own. The iced champagne, which I had never before tasted, seemed to me the nectar of the gods. Young Winch filled my glass as often as it was emptied, for a few short, jolly speeches were made and a great many toasts

drunk. The ladies filtered away before we knew it; and we were first aroused from our delightful revelry by Mr. Mortimer, who came, hat in hand, to announce that the Misses Tatting and Dunlap were waiting for us.

On the way home I confided to the latter my interview with Miss Levi, and had it on my tongue's end to tell her about Amanda. I longed to pour out my heart to a sympathizing ear, and would probably have done it, had Hester Street been a little farther off.

On reaching the attic I went into Swansford's room for a little chat, before going to bed. He was highly excited. He looked up at the lithographs of Mendelssohn and Beethoven, shook his fist, and cried, "Oh, you grand old Trojans! did you ever have to endure what I have? I don't believe it! You had those around who knew what you were, and what your art is, but I,—see here, Godfrey! This is the insane, idiotic stuff that people go into ecstasies about."

He sat down to the piano, played a hideous, flashy accompaniment, and sang, with extravagant voice and gesture, one of the sentimental songs to which

we had been treated. I threw myself back on his bed, in convulsions of laughter.

"My words are poor enough," he continued, "but what do you say to these:—

"When ho-hollow hearts shall wear a mask,
 'Twill break your own to see-he-hee,
 In such a mo-homent, I but ask
 That you'll remember—that you'll re-MEM-ber
 —you'll re—ME-HE-HEM—be-e-r me!"

—oh, and the young ladies turn up their eyes like ducks in a thunder-storm, at *that*, and have no ear for the splendid passion of 'Adelaïda'! It's enough to make one despise the human race. I could grind out such stuff by the bushel; why not take my revenge on the fools in this way? Why not give them the absurdest satire, which they shall suck down as pure sentiment? I'll laugh at them, and they'll pay me for it! Come, Godfrey, give me some nonsense which will pass for a fashionable song; I'm in the humour for a bit of devilry to-night."

"Agreed!" I cried, springing from the bed. I eagerly caught at the idea, for it seemed like a per-

sonal discharge of my petty spite against Miss Levi. I took a pencil and the back of a music-sheet, and, as sense was not material to the composition, in a short time produced the following :—

“Away, my soul! This withered hand
No more may sing of joy :
The roses redden o'er the land
Which autumn gales destroy ;
But when my hopes shall shine as fair
As bowers beneath the hill,
I'll bid the tempest hear my prayer,
And dream you love me still !

“The sky is dark : no stars intrude
To bind the brow of day.
Oh, why should love, so wildly wooed,
Refuse to turn away ?
The lark is loud, the wind is high,
And Fate must have her will :
Ah, nought is left me but to die,
And dream you love me still !”

“The very thing!” exclaimed Swansford, wiping away tears of the laughter which had twice interrupted my reading. “I've got the melody; give me the candle, and we'll have the whole performance.”

He sang it over and over with the purest, most

rollicking relish, introducing each time new and fantastic ornaments, until the force of burlesque could no farther go. My intense enjoyment of the fun kept up his inspiration; and the melody, with its preposterous accompaniment, was fairly written before our merry mood began to decline. The piece was entitled "A Fashionable Song," and we decided that it should be offered to a publisher the very next day.

It was late when I awoke; and in the practical reaction from the night's excitement I thought very little of the matter until the sound of Swansford's piano recalled it. He met me, smiling, as he said, "Our song is really not a bad thing of its kind, though the kind is low enough. But, of course, we need never be known as the authors."

He put on his hat, and went out, with the manuscript in his hand. I accompanied him as far as the Park, in order to make a call, to which I did not attach any particular hope (I had been too often disappointed for that!), but in fulfilment of a promise. Among the new acquaintances I had made at Winch

ball, was a Mr. Lettsom, who was acting as a law reporter for various daily papers. In the course of a little conversation which I had with him, I mentioned my wish to obtain literary employment of some kind, and asked whether he knew of any vacancy. He informed me that reporting was the surest resource for a young man who was obliged to earn his living by his pen. Most of the prominent editors, he said, had begun life either as reporters or printers, and there could be no better school in which to make one's talent ready and available.

Something in Mr. Lettsom's plainness, both of face and manner, inspired me with confidence in his judgment, and I eagerly accepted his invitation to call upon him at the office of the 'Daily Wonder', where I hoped, at least, to hear something that would put me on the right track.

I found him in the fourth story of the building, at a little desk in the corner of a room filled with similar desks, at which other gentlemen were either writing or inspecting enormous files of newspapers. A large table in the centre of the room was covered

with maps, dictionaries, and books of reference. There was not much conversation, except when a man with smutty hands, a paper cap on his head, and a newspaper tied around his waist, came in and said, "Hurry up with that foreign news copy! It's time the Extra was out!" To me the scene was both strange and imposing. This was the Delphic cave whence was uttered the daily oracular Voice, which guided so many thousands of believing brains; these were the attendant priests, who sat in the very adytum of the temple, and perhaps assisted in the construction of the sentences of power.

There was nothing oracular about Mr. Lettsom. With his thin face, sandy eyebrows, and quiet voice, he was as ordinary a man in appearance as one will meet in a day's travel. He seemed, and no doubt was incapable of enthusiasm; but there was a mixture of frankness, kindness, and simple good-sense in him, which atoned for the absence of any loftier faculty. I had no claim whatever upon his good offices; he scarcely knew more of me than my name, and had only asked me to step in to him at an hour when he should

have a little leisure for talk. I was, therefore, quite overcome, when, after the first greetings, he said,—

“I have been making inquiries this morning, at the newspaper offices. It is a pity I did not meet you sooner, as the Anniversaries, when extra work is always needed, are nearly over; but there may be a chance for you here. It depends upon yourself, if Mr. Clarendon, the chief editor of the ‘Wonder,’ is satisfied to try you. An insignificant post, and poorly paid at first,—but so are all beginnings. So many young men come to the city with high expectations, that there would be no difficulty in getting any number of full-grown editors and critics, while the apprentices’ places are rarely in demand. I tell you this beforehand. We will now call on Mr. Clarendon.”

Before I could recover my breath, we were in the sacred presence, in a small adjoining room. Mr. Clarendon sat at a library table, which rested on a countless array of drawers. He was writing rapidly on long, narrow slips of paper, which he numbered and transferred from his right to his left hand as

they were finished. He must have heard our entrance, but neither lifted his head nor noticed us in any way until Mr. Lettsom announced,—

“This is Mr. Godfrey, the young gentleman about whom I spoke to you this morning.”

“Very well, Lettsom,”—and the latter left the room. Mr. Clarendon bowed in an abstracted way, pointed with the top of his quill to a chair on the other side of the table, and resumed his writing.

He was a man of middle age, good presence, and with an expression of penetration, shrewdness, and decision in his distinctly moulded features. His head was massive and finely formed; the hair, once light-brown, was now almost wholly gray, and the eyes of that rich golden-bronze tint which is as beautiful as it is rare. Although his frame was large, I was struck by the smallness, whiteness, and symmetry of his hand.

I took the seat indicated, and waited for him to speak. He wrote half of one of his slips, and then, having apparently finished a paragraph, said, without looking up,—

"So, you want to try your hand at newspaper work?"

I assented, stating that I was willing to perform any kind of literary labour of which I might be capable.

"You have never done anything of the sort, I suppose. Have you ever written for publication?"

"Yes."

"What?"

The few poems and the accepted story seemed very insignificant now,—but they were all I had. I mentioned them.

"That is hardly a recommendation," he said, resuming his writing; "rather the reverse. We want a plain style, exact adherence to facts, and above all—quickness. You may have these qualities, nevertheless. Let us see."

He turned over a pile of newspapers at his right hand, selected, almost at random, the 'Baltimore American,' and handed it to me, saying, "You will find the city news on the third page. Look over it and tell me if you see anything of sufficient importance to copy."

"Nothing, unless it is this—'Conflagration at Fell's Point,'" I answered, after rapidly running my eye up and down the columns.

"Now go to yonder table—you will find pen and paper there—and condense this half-column account into fifteen lines, giving all the material facts."

How lucky it is, I thought, as I prepared to obey, that I went through such a thorough course of amplification and condensation at the Honeybrook Academy! My mind instantly reverted to the old drill, and resumed something of its mechanical dexterity. In fifteen or twenty minutes I had performed the work, Mr. Clarendon, in the mean time, writing steadily and silently on his narrow slips.

"It is done, sir," I said, venturing to interrupt him.

"Bring it here."

I handed him both the original article and my abbreviated statement. He compared them, as it seemed to me, by a single glance of the eye. Such rapidity of mental action was little short of the miraculous.

"Fairly done, for a beginner," he then remarked.

"I will try you, Mr. Godfrey. This will be the kind

of work I shall first give you. You will make blunders and omissions until you are better broken to the business. Six dollars a week is all you are worth now ; will that satisfy you ?”

Satisfy ? It was deliverance ! It was a branch of Pactolus, bursting at my feet, to bear me onward to all golden possibilities ! I blundered forth both my assent and gratitude, which Mr. Clarendon, having completed his article, cut short by conducting me to the larger room, where he presented me to one of the gentlemen whom he addressed as Mr. Severn, saying, “Mr. Godfrey is to be set at condensing the miscellaneous. He will come here at ten o’clock to-morrow morning. Have an eye to him now and then.”

Mr. Severn, who had a worn and haggard look, was evidently glad to learn that I was to relieve him of some of his duties. His reception was mildly cordial, and I was a little surprised that he betrayed no more curiosity to know who or what I was.

Overflowing with joy at my unexpected good for-

tune, I hastened back to Mrs. Very's to communicate the happy news to Swansford. But I was obliged to control my impatience until late in the afternoon. When at last I heard his step coming up the stairs, I threw open my door and beckoned him in. He, too, seemed no less excited than myself. Flinging his hat upon my bed, he cried out, "Godfrey!" at the same instant that I cried—

"Swansford! *such* news! hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" he echoed, but his face fell. "Why, who told you?"

"Who told me?" I asked, in surprise; "why, it happened to me!"

"*What* happened to you? Good God!" he exclaimed in sudden alarm, "you have not gone and sold the song to somebody else?"

In the tumult of my thoughts, I had forgotten all about the song. With a hearty laugh at the comical expression on Swansford's face, I pushed him into a chair and triumphantly told him my story.

"I congratulate you, Godfrey," he said, giving me

his hand. "This is a lucky day for both of us. I thought I should astonish you, but there's not much chance of that, now, and I'm heartily glad of it."

"What do you mean?"

"Let me tell *my* story. When I left you at the Park Gate, I started to go down to Kettlewell's, but, by the time I had reached the Astor House, it occurred to me, that, as he deals in just such sentimental songs as we have burlesqued, I should have but a small chance of doing anything with him. Besides, I dislike the man, although he published my compositions when no one else would. So I turned about and went up street to Mackintosh, who is at least a gentlemanly fellow. I produced the song, first told him what it was, saw that he thought the idea a good one, and then sang it as well as I could. There was another gentleman in the store, and they both laughed like the deuce when I wound up with the grand final cadenza. Mackintosh, I think, would have taken the song; but the other gentleman came up, clapped his hand on my shoulder, and said, 'I must have that. I'll buy it, out and

out. Joe shall sing it this very night!' I didn't know who he was, but Mackintosh then introduced him to me as Bridger, of Bridger's Minstrels. 'What's your price, copyright and all?' he asked. Thinking it was a joke, I retorted with, 'A hundred dollars.' 'Fifty,' said he. 'No, a hundred,' I answered, keeping up the fun. 'Well—split the difference. Say the word, and here's your money.' 'Seeing it's you'—I began to say, but before I had finished there were seventy-five dollars in my hand,—here they are!—and Bridger was writing a bill of sale, including the copyright. Mackintosh opened his eyes; but I pretended to take the matter coolly, though I hardly knew whether I was standing on my head or heels. But what a shame and humiliation! Seventy-five dollars for a burlesque to be sung by Ethiopian Minstrels!"

"There's neither shame nor humiliation about it!" I protested. "It's grand and glorious! Only think, Swansford,—ten weeks' board each for an hour's work!"

"*I think of years of work, and not an hour of*

appreciative recognition," said he, relapsing into sudden gloom.

But my sunshine was too powerful for his shadow. I insisted on crowning this *dies mirabilis* with an Olympian banquet in the best oyster-cellar of the Bowery, and carried my point. We had broiled oysters, a little out of season, and a bottle of champagne, though Swansford would have preferred ale, as being so much cheaper. I was in a splendid mood, and again carried my point.

This ravishing dawn of prosperity melted my soul; and there, in the little stall, scarcely separated from roystering and swearing bullies on either side, I whispered to Swansford my love for Amanda and my dreams of the future which we should share.


He bent down his head and said nothing, but I saw a tear drop into his wine.

We rose and walked silently homewards, arm-in-arm.

CHAPTER V.

WHICH "CONDENSES THE MISCELLANEOUS" OF A
YEAR.

THE next day commenced for me a new life—a life of responsible, regulated labour, and certain, if moderate reward. It was not difficult to resume the harness, for my temporary freedom had not been sufficiently enjoyed to tempt me to prolong it. My life already possessed a serious direction, leading, I fondly believed, to that home of my own creation which my poor mother had foreseen upon her death-bed. This hope was stronger at that time than any literary aspirations. Indeed, I would have sacrificed the latter without much regret, provided another and more speedy path to wealth and distinction had pre-



sented itself. But my mind had received its bent from my cheaply-won triumphs at the Honeybrook Academy; and I had too little experience of life to know how easily a young and plastic nature accommodates itself to different forms of training.

I took my appointed desk in the editorial room of the 'Daily Wonder,' and commenced my allotted labour of "condensing the miscellaneous." I was so anxious to give satisfaction, that no paper—even the most insignificant country sheet—passed through my hands without being carefully inspected. I sat at my desk from ten to twelve hours a day, selecting, condensing, and polishing my items, until Smeaton, the foreman of the composing-room—the man with smutty hands and paper cap—informed me, as he took my slips, "You do pile up the Miscellaneous in an awful way; half of that will be crowded out of to-night's make-up."

Not a fire, murder, railroad disaster, daring burglary, shocking accident, tragic occurrence, curious phenomenon or singular freak of nature, escaped my eyes; and I was beginning to congratulate myself on

my expertness, when, on the third day, I received a most unexpected humiliation. I had overlooked the result of an election to fill a vacancy in the Fourth Congressional District of Tennessee,—a circumstance which my colleagues who “condensed the miscellaneous” for the ‘Marvel,’ the ‘Monitor,’ and the ‘Avenger,’ had all duly commemorated, thus distancing the ‘Wonder’ for that day. Mr. Clarendon’s wrath was both strong and freely expressed. It would have been still more severe, Mr. Severn informed me, but for the lucky chance that the “city editor,” in reporting a fire in Broome Street, had obtained both the amount of insurance and the names of the companies, which were not mentioned in the rival dailies, and thereby partly compensated my oversight. I found that the rivalry extended to the smallest details in the composition of a paper, and was felt as keenly by the subordinates of the establishment as by the principals. There was an eager comparison of the various journals every morning, and while the least advantage of the ‘Wonder’ in point of news was the subject of general rejoicing, so the

most insignificant shortcoming seemed to be felt by each as a personal grievance. I very soon caught the infection, and became as sensitive a partisan as the rest.

There was a marked change in Mr. Jenks's manner towards me when he discovered my new position. My short story with the unmistakable moral was accepted with some flattering remarks, to the effect that I was already improving in style, and he thought he could afford to pay me ten dollars instead of five. He called me back when I was leaving his office, adding in a careless way, "Of course you know Mr. Withering, the literary critic of the 'Wonder.' I wish you would just call his attention to the June number of 'The Hesperian.' Here is an extra copy for him."

On Saturday afternoon I received the stipulated six dollars, which I felt had been well earned. This sum was sufficient to pay my board and all other necessary expenses, thus making me independent of literature and its scanty, uncertain returns. I was already so fortunate as to possess an occupation and

a taste; the narrow bounds of my life were satisfactorily filled. I not only felt but saw that others recognized in me a new importance. Even Mr. Mortimer, identifying me with the 'Wonder,' seemed to take it for granted that I was the depository of much secret intelligence, in matters of current gossip, politics, or finance. The demand for my opinion on these matters created the supply, and it was astonishing how soon my words, until now shy, hesitating, and painfully self-distrustful, became assured and oracular. Rand's opinion, as to the necessity of certain metals, either in face or pocket, seemed about to be justified.

When I returned home that evening, a new delight awaited me. Mrs. Very handed me a letter, addressed to "Mr. John Godfrey," in a coarse, awkward hand, which puzzled me a little until I noticed the post-mark, "Cardiff," in one corner. Then I rushed up to my room, locked the door, and tore open the envelope with trembling haste. A delicate enclosure, of silky pink paper, and redolent of patchouly, dropped out; but I resolutely inspected the rough

husk before feasting my heart on the honeyed kernel. This was Dan's letter :—

“Sunday, May the 23rd.

“RESPECTED FRIEND,

“I received your favour in which you informed me that you was getting on so well, and gave the other as you directed. Thought it best to wait for the other's answer, though there is no particular news. Sep Bratton goes to the ‘Buck’ every day, and there's high goings on between him and the squire. Your friend Mr. Rand was there again. People say the squire is speculating about Pottsville, and will cut up pretty fat some day, which is no business of mine, but thought you might like to hear. We are all well, and mother and Sue says remember me to him. I guess Ben and her is satisfied with one another, but you need not say I told you. There is a mistress at the school this summer, a right smart young woman, her name is Lavina Wilkins. And hoping these few lines will find you enjoying good health, I remain,

“Yours, respectfully,

“DANIEL YULE.”

This letter was almost like the touch of Dan's broad, honest hand; it brought a breeze from the valley with it, and a burst of sunshine, in which I beheld the pond, the shaded footpath, and the lonely bank beside the old hemlock-tree. With a sigh of yearning tenderness I stretched forth my empty arms and murmured, "Dear Amanda!" Then I kissed the fragrant pink of the little note, and gloated over my own name, traced in fine Italian hand. The words looked so smooth, so demure, so gently calm—in short, so like herself! My heart thrilled with joy as I deciphered, on the fairy seal of sky-blue wax, scarcely larger than a three-cent piece, the words "*toujours fidèle*." After this, I had no more power of abstinence. The coming joy must be tasted.

Her letter was very short in comparison with mine, so short, indeed, that after three readings I knew it by heart, and could repeat it to myself as I walked down Chatham Street. I can still recall it, word by word.

"Dear John," (there were volumes of withheld confession for me in that one adjective):—

"How pleased I was to get your *beautiful* letter!

Ma was not at home, so I was *alone* and could read it undisturbed, fancying you were *near* me. Do you really think of me *so much*? Do I *always* seem present to you? I can scarcely believe it yet, although you say it, and I *feel* in my *heart* that you are *true*. I am not afraid that when you get to be a *great* writer, you will forget me or any of us. Oh, it is a *bliss* to find *one* upon whom we can rely! You may imagine how much I have thought about you since you left. It was so sudden, and I was so *bewildered* by what you said, and I cannot remember what *I* said or did. But I do not forget any of *your* words. They cannot be unsaid, can they? Tell me truly, now, do you wish it could be so?—but no, I will not *ask* the question. We were at Carterstown last Sunday, and Mr. Perego preached from the text—Love is strong as death, Jealousy cruel as the grave. I wished you could *only* have heard it! How *some* people can be so jealous is past my comprehension: they can't have much *faith*, it seems to me.

“ Oh, your letter was *so* beautiful! *so* poetic! I

am quite ashamed to send you my *prose* in return. I have not your *gift* of expressing myself; and you must *imagine* all that I am not able to say. Do not ask too much of me. I am afraid you do not know all my *deficiencies*, and perhaps I had better stop now, lest I might disclose them to your gaze. Don't you think, with me, that *speech* is not necessary, where people understand each other's *feelings*? I could be silent for *years*, if *fate* required it, not but what there is a great *consolation* in the interchange of thoughts. Your description of your life in New York was *very* interesting, and I want to hear more of it; but now I must say good-bye, for fear of interruption. I *cannot* repeat, even with the pen, *your* words at the close of your letter, but you won't care about it *now*, will you?

"A. B.

"P.S.—Oh, do not write very often—not more than once in two or three months. It would be *dreadful* if Pa or Ma or Sep should find it out. They all think I am a child with no mind of my own.

And I cannot look Dan Yule in the face: he *must* suspect something, and what if he should get drunk and tell! Not that he drinks, but we can't tell what *may* happen, and I am *so* frightened for fear our *poor, harmless letters* should fall into somebody's hands.

"N.B.—I have received 'The Hesperian' through the Post-office. Sep brought it, but he did not know your hand. How lucky! Leonora's Dream is *lovely!*"

How easily I read, in those artless, timid sentences, her shy, pure, yet steadfastly faithful maiden heart! Even my own tumultuous utterances of passion lost their eloquence, beside the soft serenity of her voice. The tender playfulness with which she avoided repeating the fond epithets I had used, quite charmed me. Love had donned a witching, coquettish mask, well knowing that his own immortal eyes shone through it. I was completely happy, but an instinct told me not to intrude my joy on Swansford's mysterious sorrow: so, that night, I kept my room and wrote another poem.

My life now assumed a somewhat monotonous sameness. For months I strictly performed my appointed duties, increasing my circle of acquaintances but slightly, and acquiring no experiences which seem worthy of being recorded. My nature, apparently, was resting from the excitements of the previous year, and its rapid, partly enforced development was followed by a long period of repose. Little by little, however, I was gaining in knowledge of life, in self-reliance, and in power of discriminating between the true and the false, in men and things; but in all these particulars I suspect I was still behind most young men of my own age. Certainly I saw not yet the outcropping of the grosser elements of human nature which a great city brings to light, yet I began to feel a dim conviction that there *was* something, that my own innocence and ignorance were exceptional, and that, whether in the way of observation or experience, I had much to learn.

About the beginning of winter, Mr. Clarendon after informing me that he considered me tolerably well broken to the harness, and expressing his satis-

faction with my punctual, steady habits of work, raised my salary to ten dollars a week. I was by this time able to do "the Miscellaneous" much more rapidly, and was frequently called upon, in addition, to write short items about the weather, the appearance of the city on particular occasions, or such other indefinite subjects as might be safely intrusted to a new hand. Thus I became more and more, in my own estimation, an integral part of the 'Daily Wonder,' but fortunately did not feel the loss of the individuality which it absorbed.

The increase of my salary, added to an occasional windfall from 'The Hesperian,' enabled me now to set about gratifying a secret desire which I had long cherished. This was nothing less than to publish a volume. Swansford, who had great faith in my abilities, advised me to this step; but no persuasion was necessary to convince me of its expediency. As the author of a popular book, I believed that Squire Bratton would bow his haughty crest before me, and Uncle Amos approach me with a penitent confession of misdemeanour. Instead of running at the stirrup,

as I had been doing, it was a bold leap into the saddle. Raised thus a head and shoulders above the "heartless, unheeding crowd," I should spatter instead of being spattered. It was an enticing idea, and I had scarcely patience to wait for its fulfilment.

In another respect, however, Swansford was perverse, and his perverseness greatly annoyed me. Our 'Fashionable Song' proved to be very popular. It was published as the composition of Bridger (of Bridger's Minstrels), and he, of course, received all the fame. It was even reported in the papers that his commission on the sale, he being owner of the copyright, amounted to more than a thousand dollars. I was furious when I read this to Swansford, but he only smiled, in his melancholy way, as he remarked,—

"He is welcome to the money, and his success with that stuff reconciles me to my share of the pay. He would give a hundred dollars for another, Mackintosh tells me."

"Don't do it!" I cried, eagerly. "A hundred dollars and half the gains of the copyright will be

little enough. Think what we have lost on the first one!"

"You forget, Godfrey, how glad we were to get it. Why, we should have been satisfied with one tenth of the sum. But I wrote the thing in a freak of disgust, which I have outlived, thank God! Why should I allow such themes to enter my brain at all? The time is too short, the mission too solemn, for this profane trifling."

"But, Swansford," I cried, "you surely don't mean that you will not write another, if I furnish the words?"

"Yes," said he, gravely, and lowering his voice almost to a whisper; "I am writing a symphony. It will be my first effort at a work which might be worthy to offer to those two Masters yonder, if they were alive. The first movement is finished—wait—sit down—don't interrupt me!"

He took his seat at the piano, drew up his coat-sleeves, turned back his wristbands, and commenced playing. It was a sad, monotonous theme, based, for the most part, on low, rumbling chords, which re-

minded me, more than anything else, of distant thunder on the horizon of a summer night. A certain phrase, running into the higher notes, and thence descending by broad, lingering intervals, was several times repeated. The general effect of the composition was weird and mystic; I felt that I did not fully comprehend its meaning.

Swansford at last ceased and turned towards me with excited eyes. "There!" he cried; "I have carried it so far, but beyond that there is a confusion which I cannot yet unravel. This is only the presentiment of the struggle; its reality is to come. I feel what it should be, but when my mind tries to grasp it, I encounter cloud instead of form. Oh, if I were sure of reaching it at last, I would gladly give sweat, blood, and agony!"

He covered his face with his hands, and bent forward over the piano. I recognized and envied in him the presence of a consuming artistic passion. Involuntarily, I asked myself whether my love of literature possessed me with the same intensity, and was obliged to confess that it did not. I was a lover,

not a worshipper. I was not strong enough to spurn an avenue of success, though it did not point to the highest goal. But I was at least capable of fitting reverence for Swansford's loftier and more delicately constituted nature, and made no further reference, then, to the offer he had received.

When I returned to the subject, a few days afterwards, I found him as stubborn as ever. My share of the money which we might earn so easily would have enabled me at once to publish my volume; and as I was conscious of no special degradation in the first instance, so I could not for the life of me feel that a repetition of the joke would be a flagrant offence against either his art or mine. My representations to this effect were useless. He was completely absorbed in his symphony; and filled with a rapt, devotional spirit, which, by contrast with my position, made me seem a tempter, assailing him with evil suggestions. I was silent, and Bridger did not get his second song.

During the winter my circle of experience was considerably enlarged. A small portion of the

“complimentary” privileges of the ‘Wonder’ fell to my share, and I made acquaintance with lectures, concerts, the drama, and the opera. Swansford sometimes accompanied me to the latter; and from him I learned the character and significance of works which had else impressed me with a vague, voluptuous, unintelligent delight. In my leisure hours I undertook the task of preparing my poems for publication. I had too great a liking for my own progeny to reject any of them; but, even then, there were not more than enough to form a thin volume of a hundred and twenty pages. The choice of a title puzzled me exceedingly. I hesitated for a long time between ‘The Wind-Harp’ and ‘Æolian Harmonies,’ until Swansford informed me that both were equally suggestive of monotonous effect. Then I went to the opposite extreme of simplicity, and adopted ‘First Poems, by John Godfrey,’—which the publisher, who was to lend me his imprint (I paying all the expenses of printing and binding and receiving half the proceeds of the sales), rejected as fatal to success. It would never do, he said, to announce ‘*First Poems*;

nobody would buy them ; I must presuppose that the public was familiar with my productions ; many persons bought, simply to show that they kept up with the current literature, and the word "First" would tell them the whole story. Why not say 'Leonora's Dream,' (he saw that was the name of the leading poem,) 'and Other Poems' ? And so it was settled.

During all this time I had tried to gratify Amanda's wish with regard to the correspondence. It was hard, very hard, to endure three months' silence ; but as she begged it for *her* sake, I tried to quiet my impatient heart and console myself with the knowledge of our mutual constancy. Her letters were short, but precious beyond computation. Her expressions were none the less sweet that they were constantly repeated ; did not I, also, repeat over and over, without the possibility of exhausting their emphasis, my own protestations of unalterable love ? I communicated my good fortune, with sure predictions of the bright future it heralded, but kept back, as a delicious surprise, the secret of my intended publication, and another plan which was to follow it.

As it was now evident that the book could not be given to the world before May, and my twenty-first birthday occurred in June, I determined to steal a few days for a visit and present myself and my fame at the same time. I should come into possession of my legacy, and it would therefore be necessary to make a journey to Reading.

How my dreams expanded and blossomed in the breath of the opening spring! Love, Manhood, and Money,—though the last was less than it had once seemed to me,—how boundless was the first and how joyous the second!

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH I AGAIN BEHOLD AMANDA.

TOWARDS the end of May the important book appeared. I am sure that no immortal work was ever watched, through its different processes of incarnation, with such tender solicitude. I lingered over the first proofs, the revised proofs, and the printed and folded sheets, with a proud, luxurious interest ; and the final consummation—the little volume, bound and lettered—was so precious that I could have kissed the leaves one by one. It seemed incredible that the “John Godfrey” on the title-page really meant myself! A book for me had hitherto possessed a sublime, mystical individuality of its own, and this, which had grown beneath my hand, by stages of manufacture as

distinctly material as those which go to the formation of a shoe or a stove, was now to be classed among those silent, eloquent personalities! It might be placed side by side with 'Paradise Lost' or 'Childe Harold,' on book-shelves; who could tell whither chance or fortune might not carry it, or what young and burning lips it might not help unseal?

A year previous, I should have been ready to expect the event announced by portents, such as precede the incarnation of a prophet,—murmurs in the air,—restless movements of the sea,—strange moods of expectancy in men. But all my boyish pyrotechnics of fancy had already dwindled down to a modest tallow-candle, and I had, now and then, my moments of severe doubt. My book, I now knew, was a venture; but whether strikingly and immediately successful, or the reverse, it would at least serve a purpose by bringing my name before the reading public, to say nothing of the dearer service which I confidently awaited from its publication.

Copies were sent to all the principal newspapers and periodicals of Boston, New York, and Philadel-

phia, and to all prominent authors, inscribed on the fly-leaf: "With the respects of John Godfrey." My position in the 'Wonder' office gave me an opportunity of seeing whatever criticisms it might call forth; and from the day of publication I looked at the column of 'Book Notices,' before searching among the local news for condensable items. For nearly a week I saw nothing, and was nigh unto despair; then came a few scattering notices, then dozens of them all together. They were mostly brief, but very pleasant. I was accredited with "tender sentiment," "sweetness of versification," and "much promise." The result of these judgments not only satisfied, but elated me. A little poem, entitled 'The Winter Wind,' which I esteemed much less than the longer and more ambitious productions, was extensively copied. In the words of a western editor, it was "worthy of the pen of Amelia B. Welby." The faults of the volume were indicated in the same indefinite way as its merits;—they were "want of maturity," "occasional violation of metre," or "redundancy of images, attributable to youth." Thus, although very few copies

of the book were demanded of the publisher, I considered it a flattering success.

All these notices I cut out and carefully preserved in a separate pocket of my portfolio. I have them still. The other day, as I took them out and read them over with an objective scrutiny in which no shadow of my former interest remained, I was struck with the vague, mechanical stamp by which they are all characterized. I sought in vain for a single line which showed the discrimination of an enlightened critic. The fact is, we had no criticism, worthy of the name, at that time. Our literature was tenderly petted, and its diffuse, superficial sentiment was perhaps even more admired than its first attempts at a profounder study of its own appropriate themes and a noble assertion of its autonomy. That brief interregnum in England, during which such writers as Moir, B. Simmons, T. K. Hervey, and Alaric A. Watts enjoyed a delusive popularity, had its counterpart on our side of the Atlantic. All our gentle, languishing echoes found spell-bound listeners, whom no one—with, perhaps, the single exception of Poe—had the

will to disenchant. Hillhouse and Dawes, Grenville Mellen and Brainard, still sat high on Parnassus, and Griswold astonished us by disinterring a whole Pantheon of forgotten worthies.

For my own part, I am grateful that it was so. I was warmed and cheered by generous words of welcome, of which I only felt the sincerity, not the critical nullity. My life was brightened and made hopeful at a time when—but I will not anticipate my story. The reader will learn, before I close, how far my maturer powers justified my early ambition; and he will acquit me of selfishness when I express the hope that all brambles may be put away from before the feet of others, as they were put away from mine. Whether or not I deserve the fame I then coveted, I am still grateful for the considerate kindness which did not venture to disturb a single illusion. What if those poems were but bubbles thrown up by the first warm fermentation of youth? For me they displayed, none the less, their fragments of rainbow colour; and I do not see why I should not rejoice in them while they lasted. Why, also, should any one say to me,

"These are air and froth, not the imperishable opals you imagine?" No; let rather me, and all such as brighten their lives with similar dreams, be deceived!

I had worked steadily and faithfully for a year at my desk in the 'Wonder' office, and Mr. Clarendon did not refuse my petition for a week's holiday. Severn agreed to perform my duties, in addition to his own, during my absence, with the understanding that I should return the service, later in the summer. To Swansford I confided so much of my intention as regarded the business with my uncle, reserving the rest until my return, for I was still uncertain how Squire Bratton would receive the knowledge of my attachment to Amanda. The dear fellow sympathized heartily with my improving prospects. He believed in the promise of my volume, because it was better than he could have done, and his predictions of my success in literature were even more enthusiastic than my own secret hopes. He was a faithful friend: would that my conscience allowed me to say the same of myself!

My last letter from Amanda had been received in

March. It was brief and hurried, and at any other time would have failed to satisfy the cravings of my heart. But I was already deep in the ecstasy of my "first proofs," and looking forward to the double surprise I was hoarding up for her. "John," she wrote, "do not be angry at my short letter, to-day, for *indeed* I am dreadfully afraid Sep, or Dan, or somebody suspects *something*. Sep asked me the other day whether I had heard from you. I thought I should sink into the ground, but I had to look him in the face and *tell a fib*. I know it wasn't right, and you would not like me to do it, but there were Pa and Ma in the room. I am well, only *so nervous* you cannot think. Dan looks at me so queer, every time we meet. I am not sure that it is *right* for us to correspond in this *underhanded* way ; but you know it was *your* proposition. I hope you won't take it hard that I should say so, but indeed I wish there was some other way in which we could *exchange our thoughts*. Mr. Perego and his wife are here to tea, and I have only five minutes to myself. We see a good deal of company now, and it takes up all my

time, nearly. I sometimes wish I was my own mistress; but I suppose such thoughts are wrong. At any rate, I am *patient*, and you can be a little so, too,—can't you? A. B."

I did not much wonder that Amanda should be somewhat uneasy lest our correspondence—the manner of which, to her frank, truthful nature, involved a certain amount of deception—should be discovered. I felt a slight twinge of conscience on perceiving that I was responsible for her disquiet, and confessed that her faith in me, as measured by her patience, must exceed mine in her. My love, certainly, did not need the nourishment of letters; but silence was a pain, and I was much better constituted to enjoy than to endure. My answer was long and consolatory in its tone. I admitted my impatience, hinting, however, that I hoped the cause of it would soon terminate; that I fully appreciated her position, so much more delicate and difficult than mine, and would release her from it as soon as the improvement in my fortunes would allow. Meanwhile, I said, she

should only write when she felt assured that she ran no risk in so doing. It was no great magnanimity in me to grant this, under the circumstances, yet I involuntarily let it appear that I was making a sacrifice for her sake. She could not help feeling, I reasoned, that the balance of patience was now restored between us.

At last the happy morning of my first holiday dawned. I was fully prepared for the journey, in order to take the ten o'clock train for Trenton. A small and elegant travelling valise, packed the night before, stood on the top of my honest old trunk, and its shining leather winked at me, with an expression of eagerness for its mission. Among the contents, I need not say, were several copies of 'Leonora's Dream, and Other Poems,' *one* of them bound in green morocco, with gilt edges. After I had arrayed myself in a new travelling-suit of light-brown, and carefully adjusted the bow of my cinnamon-coloured cravat, I took a good look at my face in the little mirror, and commended what I saw. I can still remember, as if it were somebody else's face, the

dark, earnest, innocent eyes, filled with such a joyous light; the low brow and thick, wavy locks of hair; the smooth cheeks, already pale from my confined life, and the thin, sensitive lips, shaded by a silky moustache, which *would* be red, no matter how my hair had darkened. My features were not regular, and I never thought of making any claim to be called handsome; but I was vain enough to imagine that there was something "interesting" in my face, and that I would not disappoint the expectations of my Amanda. My country awkwardness, at least, had disappeared; and the self-possessed air which had come in its stead enabled me to use, instead of obscure, my few physical advantages.

My ride to Trenton was shortened by the active, excited imagination, which ran in advance and pre-figured, in a thousand ways, the coming meeting. When I arrived I found that I was too late for the afternoon stage, and, on account of the distance across the country to Cardiff, would be obliged to wait until morning. This was a sore interruption, but it came to end, and sunrise saw me once more looking on the

green Pennsylvanian hills from the driver's box. I enjoyed the fresh summer glory of the country as never before; success was behind me and love beckoned me on. What wonder if the meadow-larks piped more sweetly than ever the nightingale in Cephissian thickets, or if the blue and green of sky and earth held each other in a lovelier harmony than that of which Herbert sang? As we drove onward, the two hills which rise to the eastward of Cardiff lifted their round, leafy tops, afar off, over the rim of the horizon. I thought them the gates of Paradise.

It was noon when the stage drew up beside the white porch of the well-known tavern, and the driver announced to the four inside passengers, "Fifteen minutes for dinner!" His statement was noisily verified by a big bell, which issued from the central door, followed by the arm and then the body of the stout landlord, who looked at me doubtfully as I entered, but did not seem to recognize me. I was rather glad of this, as it proved that I had changed considerably in my appearance, and, I hoped, for the better. I was too hungry to slight the announcement

of dinner, especially as I had determined on walking over to Upper Samaria, as on that well-remembered autumn day, a year and a half before.

Taking the green morocco book from my valise, which I left in the landlord's charge, I set forth on my journey, in a tumult of delicious feelings. I know that I was frequently obliged to pause when my breath came short with the rapid beating of my heart. I anticipated and measured off the distance, and computed the time, saying to myself, "In an hour more—in fifty minutes—in three-quarters."

When I reached the top of the second hill from Cardiff, and looked across the hollow to the next rise, where the road skirts Hannaford's Woods, I saw a neat open waggon coming up towards me. The team had a familiar air, and I stopped and inspected it with some curiosity. I scarcely knew whether to be pleased or alarmed when I recognized Squire Bratton and his wife. My first impulse, I fancy, was to leap over the fence and take a wide circuit across the fields to avoid them ; but then I reflected that they were probably going to Cardiff, leaving

the coast clear for my interview with Amanda. It would be my duty to see them when they returned, and my reception then could not be prejudiced by greeting them now. I therefore resumed my walk, but more slowly, down the hill.

As the waggon approached, I could see that Squire Bratton looked more than usually spruce and important. His hat was set well back upon his head, and the ends of his upright shirt-collar made two sharp white triangles upon the broad red plain of his cheeks. He snapped his whip-lash continually in the air, and the sound prevented me from hearing the remarks which, from the motion of his head and the movement of his mouth, he was evidently making to his wife. He did not seem to recognize me until we were but a few paces apart.

"Hallo! Why, here's Godfrey!" he exclaimed, checking the horses.

I approached the wheel, and shook hands with both.

"Should hardly ha' known you, with that bit of squirrel's tail under your nose," said the Squire. "Coming over to see us all again? That's right."

"Yes," I answered; "I am on my way to Reading, and did not like to pass as near as Cardiff, without calling upon my friends in Upper Samaria. I hope you are all well."

"First-rate, first-rate. I needn't ask *you*. You've got into better business than school-teaching, I should reckon?"

I smiled in conscious triumph, as I replied, "Oh yes, much better in every way."

"Glad to hear it. Well—we must push on. See you again to-night. You'll find our house open, and *somebody* there you'll like to see: ha, ha!"

With a chuckle of satisfaction and a pistol-volley from his whip, Squire Bratton drove away, leaving me in a state of profound astonishment. What did he mean? Could it be that he had accidentally discovered, or that Amanda had confessed, the truth, and that he intended to give me a hint of his approbation? It seemed almost too complete a joy to be real, and yet I could give his words no other interpretation. As for Mrs. Bratton, she had laughed and nodded her head, as much as to say, "Go on—

it's all right!" The more incredible my fortune seemed, the more sure I felt that it must be true. An instant feeling of gratitude and affection for the old couple sprang up in my heart. I turned about, as if to thank them on the spot for my perfect happiness, but their team had gone over the hill. Then I hastened forward, up the long rise, with feet that scarcely felt the road.

Again the charming valley—how dear its every feature now!—lay spread before me. There was Yule's Mill, and the glassy pond, and the chimneys of Bratton's house, rising out of a boss of leaves; and down the stream, over the twinkling lines of the willows, I could just see the ragged top of the old hemlock, sacred to the first confession and surrender of love. I never saw a lovelier, happier, more peaceful scene: I never expect to see its like again.

Now my road led down between the sloping fields which caught the full warmth of the sun, and let their grain romp and roll in the sweet summer wind, until it bent to the level of the creek, around the knoll where I had sought for trailing arbutus, on

that day whence my life as a man ought to be dated. I there determined to cross the stream above the pond, and make my way straight through the narrow field beyond, to Bratton's house. First Amanda, and the positive assurance of my bliss! I said.

Hot and panting with excitement and the rapidity of my motions, I gained the top of the knoll at last, but a stone's throw from the house. All was quiet around. The trees hid the windows, and even the front veranda, from the point where I stood, and I thought of the magic hedge around the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. The hundred years had passed, and I was the fortunate prince, come to waken my beloved with a kiss. I paused, and held back the joy at my lips, that I might the longer taste its perfect flavour. All at once I heard the voice of some one singing,—a voice moving along under the trees. It was she!—I saw the rose-tint of her dress through the gaps in the shrubbery. I saw her glide along towards an open arbour of lattice-work, overgrown with clematis, which stood on the top of the lawn, a little to the left of the house.

Now was my fortunate moment! I sprang over the fence, crept down behind the clumps of lilac and roses, and reached the arbour as she was singing the line, "*And I've seen an eye still brighter.*" (How well I remember it!) Her back was towards me: she was looking out, over the railing, down the road to the mill. How lovely her slender figure, clad in pink lawn, showed in the green frame! I could no longer contain myself, but cried out, in a voice which I vainly strove to soften to a whisper,—

"Amanda! Dear Amanda!"

She started, with a gasp, rather than a scream, of surprise. She turned and recognized me: a fiery blush ran over her face and neck, but instantly died away, leaving her very pale. Her eyes were fixed upon mine with an expression of alarm; her lips moved a little, but she seemed unable to speak.

"I didn't mean to frighten you so, Amanda," I said,—"but I am so glad, so happy!" And I rushed forward, threw my arms around her waist, and bent down to give her the kiss for which I had hungered so long.

But she screamed, covered her face with her hands, and twisted herself out of my embrace. "Leave me alone!" she said in a low, hard voice, as she escaped to the other side of the table, and stood there, pale, and trembling a little.

"Don't be angry, darling!" I pleaded. Isn't it true, then, that your father and mother know everything? I met them on the road, and they told me to come here at once—that you would be glad to see me. I thought they *must* know, you see, and that all our troubles were over, for I'm free at last,—I'm master, and now I can speak to your father. It will all come out right, and we will be rewarded for our patience."

I gently approached her as I spoke these words. But she put out her hand to keep me away, and said, with her face turned from me, "You must not say such things to me, Mr. Godfrey."

Something in the tone of her voice seemed to chill my very blood. I was so startled and astonished that the first thought which came into my head forced for itself a passionate utterance.

"Amanda!" I cried, "tell me what all this means! What have you heard? Has anybody dared to slander me in my absence, and have you believed it?"

I had scarcely finished speaking before she sprang forth from the arbour, crying, "Charles, Charles!"

I had not heard the approaching step on the lawn, but close at hand arose a familiar masculine voice, "Why, what's the matter, dear?" Looking out, I was petrified at beholding, three paces off, my Amanda (I still thought her mine) clinging to Charley Rand, who already had his arm about her waist. Nor did he relinquish his clasp when he lifted his head and saw me.

"Godfrey!" he exclaimed; "where did you drop from all at once?"

He stretched out his hand as if expecting me to come forward and take it. I stood motionless, striving to realize the fact of this double treachery. My tongue clove to my jaws, and I was unable to articulate a word.

"What has happened, Amanda?" he asked.

"Oh, Charles!" she murmured, tenderly, with her head on his shoulder, "Mr. Godfrey has *so* frightened me."

He laughed. "Never mind," he said; "you seem to have frightened him quite as badly."

Disengaging his arm, he now approached me. I involuntarily retreated a step, and my voice returned to me.

"Stand back, Rand!" I cried. "What are you doing here? What right have you to hold Miss Bratton in your arms?"

"Come, now, that's a good joke!" said he, with an insolent air,—*"Miss Bratton? Mrs. Rand, you mean! Mrs. Rand since two days. I thought, to be sure, you had come down on purpose to congratulate us."*

I could not yet believe it. "Amanda!" I said, turning to her, and speaking with a voice which I hardly recognized as my own, "is it true? Are you married to that man?"

She stood up and looked me full in the face.

There was not a quiver of her eyelids, nor a shade of deeper colour on her pale, quiet face. "Certainly," she said.

"Good God!" I cried; "you could break your faith with me, without a word! This is your *truth*! This is your *patience*! You, whom I have so loved, for whose sake I have so laboured! Rand, did *you* know that she and I were engaged—that she had given her heart to me—that she has been mine, in the sight of God, for more than a year past?"

I saw, while I was speaking, that his face was beginning to grow dark. Amanda must have noticed it also, and have instantly decided what course to take, for she confronted me without flinching, the settled calm of her face stiffening into a hard, cold, cruel mask, in which I saw her true nature expressed,—the mingled nature of the cat and the serpent, false, selfish, and venomous.

"It is a lie!" she exclaimed. "How dare you say such things? I never was engaged to you—I never told you that I loved you!"

"Amanda!" was all I could utter. But the help-

less appeal of love, the bitter reproach, the hot indignation of an honest heart, which together found expression in that one word, were shattered against the icy visage of her treachery. She turned to Rand, with a tender, frightened air, saying, "Charles, make him go away: he is certainly crazy!"

"Come," said he, "we've had quite enough of this, Godfrey! You were always a little vain, you know, and you mustn't think that because a young lady behaves friendly, and admires your writings, and all that sort of thing, that she's dead in love with you. I don't mind your prancing around in this way, so far as I'm concerned, but I won't see my wife insulted."

I could have borne anything better than his flippant, patronizing tone; but, indeed, my back was not then strong enough to bear another feather's-weight of burden. It was not merely that the cherished bliss of my life was dashed to pieces in a moment: I was outraged, humiliated, wounded at all points. My conflicting feelings, all surging towards the same centre, possessed me wholly,

body and brain, and I can no longer disentangle them, in memory. I was mad.

"Then see yourself insulted!" I shouted. My muscles acted of themselves, with wonderful rapidity. Rand received a blow in the face, and tumbled over backwards upon the grass. His wife screamed and seemed to be making towards me, her quiet eyes lighted up horribly with a white, steely blaze. I remember turning away with a contemptuous laugh, stumbling down the lawn like a drunken man, with a dizzy humming in my ears, and finding my way, somehow, to a lonely nook under the willows, a short distance below the mill. There I sat down, and after sharp, convulsive pangs, as on that night at school when Penrose soothed me, the storm broke into tears. I covered my face with my hands, and wept long and passionately. It was impossible to think, or to call to my help the least of the consolations which afterwards came. I could feel nothing but the deadly hurt of the wound.

All at once, as the violence of my passion was wearing itself out, I felt a hand gently pressing my

shoulder. I need not have started, with a sudden, angry suspicion of further treachery : it was only Dan Yule. I took his hand, and tried to say something.

He sat down beside me, and patted my leg, with a kind familiarity. "Don't mind *me*," said he: "I guess I know what's the matter, havin' had a suspicion of it from the first. I seen what was goin' on over t' the Squire's, and had a good mind to ha' writ to you about it,—but, thinks I, it ain't none o' my business, and like as not she's told him herself, and so I'd better keep clear. But I didn't like it none the more. I'd just got in a big saw-log this afternoon, when I seen you comin' down from the Squire's, and turnin' into the willers—seemed like as if you didn't exackly know where you was goin'. So I set Jim to shut off the water when the saw got to t' other end, and sneaked across to see what had become o' you."

Dan kept his eyes on the ground while he spoke, and mechanically went on patting my leg, as if both anxious to comfort me in some way, and fearful lest his presence was embarrassing. I said something at

last about my disappointment being so unexpected—something which he interpreted as an apology for my weakness.

“You needn’t be ashamed on it,” said he. “Lots o’ fellows takes on that way, only a man doesn’t like to be seen. I s’pose people thinks it isn’t jist manly; but there’s times when you can’t help yourself. You don’t mean that you had no idee she was married, till you come here and found it out?”

I thereupon told Dan the whole story, and in telling it, I saw the trick which Amanda had played with me and with her own conscience. It was true that she had never said, either when I declared my love, or afterwards in her letters, *in so many words*, that she loved me; but this discovery only made the actual lie more enormous. There was conscious, cold-blooded deception from the beginning: I was bound, but not she. I suppose she must have liked me, in her passive way; or I may have been the first fish that came into her net. Whatever her motive was, in allowing me to believe my love returned, her selfish calculation in the matter, from beginning to

end, was now apparent. When I came to the closing scene of the wretched history, Dan became a little excited. Instead of patting my leg, he gave it a spanking slap, and swore, in a general way, without launching his words at anybody in particular. The blow I had administered to Rand put him in a good humour again.

"I dunno but I'd ha' done` it myself, in your place," he said. "Though it isn't likely that *he* was so much to blame, after all, if he didn't know nothin' about it before."

The thought had not occurred to me. I immediately recognized its justice, and began to feel ashamed of myself.

"Well, John," Dan continued, "I reckon, now, you'll come over and stay with us to-night. Miss Lavina's back again this summer, and she has your room; but Ike's away, and you can put up for the night with me. Miss Lavina, I needn't mind tellin' *you*, is likely to stay with us. Sue'll be married after harvest, and I've kind o' prevailed on Lavina to take her place."

Dan looked so sheepish and happy that I understood him. I thanked him for all his past and present kindness, and congratulated him with fresh tears in my eyes, on the fortune which I never, never should know. I felt, nevertheless, that it was impossible to accept his invitation,—impossible for me, in my agitated state, to spend more time in Upper Samaria than would be required to get over the borders of the township. I told him this, and he seemed to understand it. He had lighted his pipe, and was leaning against one of the willows, comfortably smoking. As I arose from my seat on the log, some hard substance in my breast-pocket struck my arm.

“Dan,” I said, “have you a match?”

“Yes. Have you learned to smoke, at last?”

I said nothing, but took the match he offered, and the green morocco, gilt-edged copy of ‘*Leonora’s Dream*,’ on the fly-leaf of which I had written a sonnet,—O misery!—a sonnet full of the truest and the tenderest love, to the wife of Charley Rand! I doubled back the sumptuous covers, and turned the leaves from me, that I might not see one word of

that mockery, which I, poor fool! had written with tears of joy dimming my eyes; then, striking fire with the match, I held it to the book.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Dan; "what's that for?"

The flames soon devoured not only the manuscript but all the hundred and twenty pages of my immortal verse. Then I threw the glittering cover on the ground, and stamped on it with fiendish satisfaction. When it had been so bruised and disfigured that the title was illegible, I flung it down the bank into the stream.

I watched it as it drifted slowly along, past rotting snag and slimy grass, past oozy banks, and flats of rank skunk-cabbage, and felt that my own gilt-edged dreams were flung with it to as foul a fate. I had lost my love, and it left no consecration behind,—nothing but shame, and bitterness of heart, and contempt for what I had revered in myself as most holy!

CHAPTER VII.

RELATING HOW I CAME INTO POSSESSION OF MY
INHERITANCE.

AN hour before sunset I found myself again on the ridge overlooking the valley. I was weak and tired; and as I leaned upon the fence after climbing the long ascent, I was conscious of the dismal change which had come upon the beautiful world of three hours before. I saw the same woods and hills, but the foliage had become hard and black, the fields dreary in their flat greenness, and the sky seemed to hold itself aloof in a cold divorce from the landscape to which it had so lately been softly wedded. Night, or storm, or winter, would have been less cheerless. An unutterable sense of loneliness filled my heart.

I was still young enough to suppose that all emotions were eternal simply because they were emotions. I was sure that my love would never have faded or changed ; now it was violently torn from me, leaving a pang in its place, to inherit its own enduring life. The world could give nothing to compensate me for this loss. Better would it be if I could die, and so escape the endless procession of dark, blighted, hopeless days. Then I saw, for the first time, and stood face to face with that Doubt which suspends us, trembling, over the abyss of nothingness. I asked that question which no human mind dare long entertain,—that question, the breath of which crumbles Good and Evil, Time, Faith, and Providence, making of life a terror and a despair. The outer crust of thought, upon which I had lived, gave way, and I looked shudderingly down into central deeps of darkness and of fire.

The struggle which my nature was undergoing will be better understood when its mixed character is considered. Either pure sorrow for a lost love, or vain yearning for a love which had been withheld,

could have been comprehended by the heart, and therefore so grasped as to be best borne; but this—what was it? A tumult of love and hate,—for the habit of a year could not be unlearned in a moment,—disappointed hope, betrayed faith, devotion ignorantly given to heartless selfishness, a revelation of the baseness of human nature shed upon a boundless trust in its nobility! It assailed all my forms of faith at once, depriving me not only of love, but of the supports which might have helped me to bear its loss.

I knew that she, henceforth, would hate me. Even if some rudimentary hint of a conscience existed in her nature, and the remembrance of her deception were able to give it an occasional uneasiness, the blow I inflicted on her husband, before her eyes, more than cancelled the wrong. She would now justify herself to herself, as fully as to him. If the story were ever disclosed, both, of course, would be considered the aggrieved parties in the eyes of the world, and I the vain, adventurous miscreant.

I walked slowly and wearily back to Cardiff, keep-

ing a good look-out for the vehicle of the elder Brattons, which I discerned far enough in advance to avoid successfully. The landlord by this time had found out who I was, and tortured me with stories about the marriage, which I had not tact enough to escape. It appeared, from what he said, that Squire Bratton, Mulford, and Rand's father, with some others, were concerned in a speculation for buying coal-lands, the profits whereupon were to be realized when a certain projected railroad had been built. Rand himself was believed to have a minor share in the enterprise; he was reckoned to be "a mighty smart business-man," and the Squire took to him from the start. He had frequently come down from Reading during the previous winter, but the match had not been talked about until a few weeks before it took place. They were going to Reading to live, the landlord said, and the old folks were quite set up about it.

I gave a melancholy groan of relief, when I at last found myself in bed, and surrounded by congenial darkness. I tried to compose my thoughts to my

accustomed prayer; but the spectre I had invoked showed a blank where I had once seen the face of God. Men were nothing but accidental combinations of atoms, it said; Life was a temporary condition, and joy, sorrow, duty, love, were things of education, unreal and perishable; there was neither Virtue nor Vice but in imagination,—neither happiness nor misery, nor anything positive but physical sensation—and that only while it lasted. So far from shrinking from these suggestions, I took a fearful pleasure in following them to their common termination, on the brink of that gulf where all sentient existence melts into nothing, as smoke into air.

The next day I took the stage to Reading, performing the journey in the same hardened, apathetic mood. There was even, at times, a grim satisfaction in the thought that I was now free from every emotion which could attach me to my fellow-beings,—free from the duties of blood, the tender allegiance of love, the services of friendship. I saw nothing but selfishness in the world; I would be selfish too.

Reaching Reading in the evening, I took up my

quarters at the "Mansion House." I was in no mood to claim my uncle's hospitality, although the grievance I had borne against him now seemed a very insignificant thing. I was neither afraid of him nor his efforts to procure me "a change of heart." Nearly two years had elapsed since that episode of my life, and I was beginning to see how much I had exaggerated its character. I had no dread of the approaching interview. Indeed, I so far relented towards Aunt Peggy as to take a copy of my volume for presentation to her.

When I went down Penn Street after breakfast, the next morning, to the well-known corner, I saw that a change—which, nevertheless, did not surprise me—had occurred in the establishment. The old, weather-beaten sign had disappeared, and in its place was a new one, white ground and black letters, shaded with blue: "WOOLLEY AND HIMPEL'S GROCERY STORE." Bolty was not so stupid as his heavy face and sleepy eyes proclaimed. He had already made his nest, and would not be long in feathering it comfortably.

There he was, behind the counter, a little more brisk in his movements than formerly, and with every bit of his familiar loquacity. He was a trifle taller, and his white hair was brushed straight up from his forehead instead of being cut short. His thick, pale lips hung half-open, as usual, and his eyes expressed the same lazy innocence ; but I fancied I could see the commencement of a cunning wrinkle at their corners. He wore a short jacket of grass-cloth, buttoned in front, which arrangement I admired, for I knew that the bosom of his shirt was not wont to be in a presentable condition.

As I appeared at the door, he recognized me at once. Catch him, indeed, forgetting any face he had ever known ! I suspect he still retained a sort of phlegmatic liking for me, or at least was now satisfied that I could no longer interfere with his plans, for he slipped along the counter towards me with every appearance of cordiality, stretching out his fat hand as he cried, " Why, John Godfrey ! Is that you now ? And you've come back to see us, after so long ! I declare I didn't know what had become o'

you;—but you're lookin' well—*wery* well—better as ever I see you.—Yes, ma'am! The 'Peruvian Preventative,' did you say? You couldn't take nothin' better; we sells cart-loads o' boxes—cart-loads, and the more people use 'em the more they wants 'em!"

He was off and waiting upon the customer,—a woman from the country, with very few front teeth and a sun-bonnet,—before I could say a word. I was so amused at this exhibition of his old habits, that, for the first time in two days, I felt the sensation of laughter creeping back to its accustomed nook. Presently the woman left, and, the store being now empty, Bolty returned to me.

"You was a little surprised, wasn't you?" he asked, "to see my name over the door. It's been up sence Easter, and we're doin' wery well—wery well, indeed. 'Ta'n't much of an int'rest I've got, though,—only a quarter, but it's a good beginnin'. The customers knows me, you see, and they stick to me. Mr. Woolley's got a good deal of other business on his hands now."

"Yes," said I, "I have heard of it."

"Coal-lands? Yes; you've heerd right. Not that I know much about it. He's awful close, Mr. Woolley is,—keeps his own counsel, as he says, and Mulford and Rand's too, I guess. But what have *you* a-been carryin' on? You look mighty smart, so I guess it ha'n't been a bad spec."

I told Bolty as much in reference to my position in New York as I thought proper, and then asked for my uncle.

"He's gone down to the canawl," said Bolty; "but he'll be back as soon as the Banks is open."

"Then I'll go in and see Aunt Peggy."

I entered the little back-parlour. The sofa and chairs were more shiny and slippery than ever, and a jagged abattis of horse-hair was beginning to project from the edges of the seats. There was no improvement in the atmosphere of the room since I had left;—nothing had been taken away, and nothing added except a mezzotint of the Rev. Mr. Mellowby, in a flat mahogany frame. My aunt was not there, but I heard noises in the kitchen, and went thither without further ceremony.

Aunt Peggy was bending over the stove, with a handkerchief around her head, an old calico apron over her dress, a pot-lid in one hand and a pewter spoon in the other.

"Well, Aunt Peggy," said I, "how do you do by this time?"

She was very much surprised, of course; but she transferred the spoon to the hand which held the pot-lid, and greeted me with a mixture of embarrassment and affection. A few tears certainly dropped from her eyes; but I knew how easily they came, and did not feel encouraged to make any great show of emotion.

"I'm glad you've come to see us, John," she said, in her most melancholy tone. "Walk into the settin'-room. I'd like to hear that you don't bear malice against your relations, that meant to do for your good. It seemed hard, goin' away the way you did."

"Oh, Aunt Peggy, let bygones be bygones. I dare say you meant to do right, but it has turned out best as it is."

"I had mournin' enough," she said, "that things couldn't have gone as me and your uncle wanted; but I s'pose we've all got to have our trials and tribulations."

That was all we said about the matter. I was well dressed, and gave a most favourable account of my worldly prospects, and my aunt seemed considerably cheered and relieved. I suspect that her conscience had been tormented by the fear of her sister's son becoming a castaway, and that she had therefore been troubled with doubts in regard to the circumstances which drove me from her roof. My success removed that trouble, at least. Then I presented the book, in which I had turned down leaves to mark a few poems of a religious character, which I thought she might read with some satisfaction. Such things as "The Lament of Hero," I knew, would be quite unintelligible to her. She was greatly delighted with the present, promising to show it to Mr. Cutler, the new minister.

We were getting on very pleasantly together, when my uncle entered from the shop. As Bolt

had apprized him of my arrival, his face expressed more curiosity than surprise. His greeting was cordial, but its cordiality did not strike me as being entirely natural. His hair had grown grayer, but there was no shade of difference in the varnished cheeks and the large tight mouth. Intercourse with his new associates had already given him a more worldly air. It was certain that neither his unworthiness nor his fortunate assurance of "grace" occupied his thoughts so much as formerly. Considering what had passed between us, I felt more at ease in his presence than I had anticipated.

"You look very well, John," said he. "I hope you have been at least successful in temporal things."

He could not deny himself this insinuation; but I was no longer sensitive on the point, and did not notice it. Of course, I represented my affairs to him in the most prosperous light, setting forth my promising chances for the future, while feeling in my heart their utter hollowness and vanity.

"Well, you're settled at a business that seems to suit you," he said. "That's a good thing. You've

gone your way and I've gone mine, but there need not be any difficulty between us."

"No, Uncle Amos," I replied. "I have learned to take care of myself. The principal object of my visit is to relieve you from all further trouble on my account."

"In what way?" he asked.

"Why," I exclaimed, a little astonished, "don't you know that I am twenty-one?"

"Twenty-one! Oh—ah! Yes, I see. Are you sure of it? I did not think it was so soon."

Somehow, his words made an unpleasant impression upon me. I soon convinced him, by the mention of certain dates, that I knew my own age, and then added, "I am now entitled to my money, you know. If you put out last year's interest, there must have been more than eighteen hundred dollars due to me on the first of April."

"Yes," said he, "of course I put it out. But I really didn't suppose you would want the capital at once. I didn't—hm, well—make arrangements to have it ready at a moment's warning. You see,

John, you should have notified me in the proper way beforehand. This, I may say, is not notifying me at all. Besides, why should you want the money now? What will you do with it? You surely wouldn't think of speculating in the stock-market; that 'd be throwing it to the four winds. If you put it in the savings-bank, you'll only get five per cent. instead of six, as you get now. Why not let it be where it is? Use the interest if you want: I might advance you this year's, though it's put out too,—but when you've got your capital safe, keep it so."

"I wish to have my own money in my own hands," I answered, rather coldly. "I never supposed a notification would be necessary, as you knew I was entitled to receive the money as soon as I came of age. I consider myself capable of taking care of it, and even if I should lose it, that is altogether my own business."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt," said my uncle. He rubbed his shiny cheek and stretched out his lower jaw, as if perplexed. "You are entitled to the money, that is all right enough, but—but it's still *out*, and I don't see how I could get it, just now."

"At any rate, you can transfer the bond—or whatever it is—to me. That will be equivalent to the money, for the present."

Uncle Amos grew very red in the face, and was silent for a few minutes. His arm-chair seemed to be an uneasy seat. He looked at me once, but instantly turned his eyes away on encountering mine. At last he said, "I can't well do that, John, because it ain't invested separately—it's along with a good deal of my own. You see, it's this way,—I'll tell you all about it, and then I think you'll be satisfied to leave things as they are. I've gone into an operation with some other gentlemen,—we keep rather dark about it, and I don't want you to say anything,—and we've bought up a big tract of land in Monroe County, among the mountains, where there's sure to be coal. It ain't worth much now, but when the railroad is opened, there's no telling what we mayn't sell out for. The road's pretty sure to be put through in a year or two, and then the loss of interest in the mean time will be nothing in comparison to the profit we shall make by the operation. There are ten thousand

acres in all, and I was put down for one thousand ; but there were other expenses, surveyors, and we had to pay a geologist a big price to take a quiet look at the place ; so I hadn't enough of my own, without putting yours with it. I intend you shall go share and share with me in the profits. You may get six hundred, or six thousand per cent. instead of six. Don't you see how much better that will be for you ?”

“ No, I don't !” I cried. I was again thunder-struck, and the bitter tumult of my feelings began to rage anew. “ I see only this, that you had no right to touch a cent of my money. It was put in your charge by my poor mother, to be returned to me when it should become due, not to be risked in some mad speculation of yours, about which I know nothing except that one infernal scoundrel at least is engaged in it ! You to warn me against risking it in stocks, indeed ! If you meant me to go share and share with you, why did you ask me to be satisfied with six per cent. ?”

My uncle's eyes fell at these words. I saw my

advantage, and felt a wicked delight in thus holding him at my mercy. His face looked clammy, and his chin dropped, giving a peculiarly cowed, helpless expression to his mouth. When he spoke, there was a tone in his voice which I had never before heard.

"I know, John," he said, "that you don't like me overly, and perhaps you won't believe what I say; but, indeed, I did mean to share the profits with you. I thought, only, if you'd leave the money in my hands, I wouldn't say anything about the operation yet awhile. It's done now, and can't be helped."

"Why not?" I asked. "You can borrow the money, on your house and store. Give me what belongs to me, and you may keep all the profits of your 'operation,'—if you ever get any!"

He looked around with an alarmed air, carefully closed the kitchen-door, and then, resuming his seat, bent forward and whispered, "I had to do that, as it was. I raised all I could—all the property would bear. It was 'most too much for me, and I couldn't have turned the corner if I hadn't sold out a quarter

interest in the grocery to Bolty. I wish you could understand it as I do,—you'd see that it's a sure thing, perfectly sure."

It was enough for me that Bratton, Mulford, and the Rands were concerned in the business. That fact stamped it, in my mind, as a cheat and a swindle, and my uncle, it seemed, was no better than the others. I was fast hardening into an utter disbelief in human honesty. It was not so much the loss of the money which I felt, though even that had a sanctity about it as the double bequest of my dead father and mother, which I had hoped would bring me a blessing with its use. I had learned to earn my living, and knew that I should not suffer; but I was again the dupe of imposition, the innocent victim of outrage.

I was conscious of a strong bodily chill: the teeth chattered in my head. I rose from my seat, turned to him for the last time, and said, "Amos Woolley, you know that you have acted dishonestly,—that you have broken your trust, both to my mother and me. I thought once that you were trying sincerely to

serve God in your own blind, bigoted way; but now I see that Mammon is your master. Get *you* a change of heart before you preach it to others. I will not prosecute and ruin you, by showing to the world your true character, though you seem to have cared little whether or not I was ruined by your act. If you should ever repent and become honest, you will restore me my inheritance; but, until you do it, I shall not call you 'uncle,' I shall not take your hand, I shall not enter your door!"

His chin dropped lower, and his eyes were fixed on me with a reproachful expression, as he listened to my sharp words. I put on my hat and turned towards the door. "John!" he cried, "you are wrong—you will one day be sorry for what you have said."

Aunt Peggy at that moment entered from the kitchen. "You're not goin' away, John?" she said; "you'll come back to dinner at twelve?"

"No, Aunt," I answered; "I shall probably never come back again to see you. Good-bye!" And I picked up her hanging hand.

"What ails you? What has happened?"

"Ask your husband."

I went into the store, closing the door behind me. When I saw Bolty's face I felt sure that he had been eavesdropping. He did not seem surprised that I was going away, and I fancied there was something constrained and artificial in his parting, "Come back right soon, and see us again!" Perhaps I wronged him, but I was not in a mood to put the best construction upon anybody's acts or words.

I walked up Penn Street at a rapid rate, looking neither to the right nor left, and found myself, before I knew it, high up on the side of Penn's Mount, beyond and above the city. The walk had chased away the chill and stagnation of my blood. I was flushed and panting, and choosing a shady bank, I sat down and looked once more upon the broad, magnificent landscape. I was glad that my brain, at last, had become weary of thought—that I could behold the sparkle of the river and the vanishing blue of the mountains with no more touch of sentiment or feeling than the ox grazing beside me.

I accepted my fortune with an apathy which, it seemed, nothing could ever break. If I could but live thus, I said, seeing men as so many black mites in the streets of yonder city, hearing only a confused hum of life, in which the individual voice of every passion is lost, and be content myself with the simple knowledge of my existence and the sensations which belong to it, I might still experience a certain amount of happiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH I DINE WITH MR. CLARENDON AND MAKE
THE ACQUAINTANCE OF MR. BRANDAGEE.

I WAS back again at my post before my stipulated leave of absence had expired. Mr. Clarendon was evidently surprised, but not disagreeably so, at my unexpected return ; and, when I reported myself to him in his private office, asked me to take a seat,—a thing he had never done since my first interview. Beyond an occasional scolding, varied by a brief word of commendation, my intercourse with him had been very limited ; but I had acquired a profound respect both for his character and his judgment.

After I was seated, he laid down his pen, pushed the long slips of paper to one side, and looked at me across the table.

"How old are you, Godfrey?" he asked, after a pause.

"Just twenty-one."

"So much the better. You have plenty of time yet to find out what you can do best. Or are you like most young men who can write a little, and suppose that you are capable of everything?"

"I never supposed that," I protested.

"I have looked through your book," he continued. [I had presented him with a copy soon after its publication.] "It is about like nine-tenths of the poetry that is published now-a-days,—a good deal of genuine feeling and sentiment, but no art. Judging by the degree of literary cultivation in the public,—which I have had a fair opportunity of learning,—I should think it would be generally liked. But I don't want you to be misled by this fact. You have a ready pen; your talents are quick and flexible, and, with proper schooling, you may become a useful and successful newspaper writer. But I don't think you will ever achieve distinction as a poet. Are you not very fond of reading Moore, Scott, and Mrs Hemans?"

I assented, with a mixture of surprise and embarrassment. Mr. Clarendon's unfavourable opinion, however, affected me much less than it would have done a fortnight sooner.

"Let me advise you," he said, "to drop those authors for a while, and carefully read Wordsworth. I would not ask you to cease writing, for I know the request would be useless; and, except in the way of fostering a mistaken ambition, it can do you no harm. Your prose style will be none the worse from the greater compactness of thought and the richer vocabulary which poetry gives. Only," he added, with a smile, "pray keep the two in separate boxes. It is a great mistake to mix them as some writers do."

I assured Mr. Clarendon that I was by no means certain of my vocation; that the volume was an experiment, which seemed to me to be tolerably successful, but I did not suppose it finally settled the question. I was greatly obliged for his good opinion of my talents, and would read Wordsworth as he recommended. I was then about to withdraw from the room, but he detained me a moment longer.

"I am going to propose a change in your duties," he said. "You are now familiar with the composition of a newspaper, and can do better service, I think, in the City Department. It is not so mechanical as your former work,—requires quickness, correctness, and a sprightly style. You will be much out-of-doors, of course, and you may find it a little harassing at the start. But there will be an increase of salary, and you must expect to earn it."

I willingly accepted the proposal ; for, to be candid, I was getting tired of the monotony of "condensing the miscellaneous." The increase of my salary to fifteen dollars a week was also welcome. My satisfaction in saving a portion of my earnings was gone ; but a gloomier motive supplied its place. It was well to be independent of the selfish race of men,—to work out the proud and contemptuous liberty, which I proposed to myself as my sole future aim.

Mrs. Very welcomed me back with the *empressement* due to a member of her domestic circle. Mr. Mortimer shook hands with me as we went down to dinner, with an air which said, "I admit your

equality;" and Mrs. Mortimer bent her neck some three quarters of an inch more than usual, as she allowed her tightly gloved hand to rest for a second in mine. Miss Dunlap being absent on a visit to her friends in the country, my seat fell next to Miss Tatting, who made loud and particular inquiries as to how I found my relatives, and was it a nice part of the country, and which way do you go to get there, and did the ladies come to New York to buy their trimmings,—all of which I could have well spared. Swansford, I could see, was truly happy to have me again as his vis-à-vis; and in spite of my determination to trust no human being, I could not help acknowledging that he really seemed to think himself my friend. When we had talked for an hour or two, in the attic, I was almost sure that he was, and that I was his. The numb, steady ache of my wounds was beginning to tire me; I longed to cry out, even though I were heard.

It was a still, sultry evening. We sat together at the window until the stars came out, and looked down on the felt partitions between the back yards, and the

mosquitoes began to rise from a neighbouring rain-water cistern. Swansford had played to me his last composition,—something in the minor key, as usual,—and I felt the hardness and coldness of my mood give way.

“Come, old fellow,” I said, “I am five dollars a week richer than I was. Let us go out and baptize the circumstance.”

He was quite ready to join me. He had a pinched and hungry look; Mrs. Very's provender was not adapted to his delicate taste, and there were days when he scarcely ate enough to support life. We walked up the Bowery, arm-in-arm, crossed through Grand Street to Broadway, and finally descended into a glittering cellar under the Metropolitan Hotel. I had resolved to be as splendid as possible. It was not long before we were installed in a little room, as white and bright as paint and gas could make it, with dishes of soft-shell crabs and lettuce before us, and a bottle of champagne, in ice, on the floor.

I had a presentiment that I should tell Swansford everything, and I did. But it was not until the crabs

and lettuce had disappeared, and an additional half-bottle found its way to the cooler. I had no fault to find with his sympathy. He echoed my bitterest denunciations of the treachery and selfishness of men; but would not quite admit the utter falsehood of women, nor, moreover, my claim to be considered the most wronged of human beings.

"What *can* be worse?" I cried, quite reckless whether or not my voice was heard in the neighbouring stalls. "Can you tell me of any harder blow than that? I don't believe it!"

There were tears of outraged love in my eyes, and his seemed to be filling too. He shook his head mournfully, and said, "Yes, Godfrey, there is a worse fate than yours. Your contempt for her will soon heal your love: but think, now, if she were true, if she were all of womanly purity and sweetness that you ever dreamed her to be, if you *knew* that she could never love but yourself,—and then, if she were forced by her heartless family to marry another! Think what it would be to know her, day and night, given to *him*,—to still believe that her heart turned

to you as yours to her,—to add endless pity and endless agony to the yearning of love !”

His hands were tightly clasped on the table before him, and the tears were running down his thin cheeks as he spoke. I knew his story now, and my pity for his sufferings beguiled me into semi-forgetfulness of my own. I was unable to speak, but stretched out my hand and grasped his. Our palms met in a close, convulsive pressure, and we knew that we were thenceforth friends.

The next day I was both surprised and flattered on receiving an invitation to dine with Mr. Clarendon. Mr. Severn, who shared the honour, stated to me confidentially, “He wouldn’t have done it, if he didn’t look upon you as one of our stock-workers.” It was one of his ‘Wonder’ dinners, as they were called, embracing only gentlemen connected in some way with the paper. He was in the habit of giving three or four every year,—a large anniversary dinner in the winter, and smaller ones at intervals of three months. Mr. Horrocks, the chief editor of the ‘Avenger,’ gave similar entertainments to his subor-

dinates; and there was a standing dispute between them and us of the 'Wonder' as to which gentleman had the honour of originating the custom.

I dressed myself in my best to do fitting honour to the occasion, and punctually as the clock struck six rang the bell of Mr. Clarendon's door, in Washington Square. A mulatto gentleman, with a dress-coat rather finer than my own, ushered me into the drawing-room, which was empty. Mr. Clarendon, however, immediately made his appearance and received me with great heartiness of manner. He had entirely put off his official fixity of face and abruptness of speech, and I hardly knew him in his new character of the amiable, genial host.

"We shall have but few guests to-day," he said, "as my family leaves for Newport next week. Mrs. Clarendon and my niece will join us at dinner, and there will be another young lady, I believe. Mr. Brandagee and yourself are the only bachelors, and I must look to you to entertain them."

He smiled as he said this, and I felt that I ought to smile and say something polite in return; but the

effort, I am afraid, must have resulted in a dismal grin. I was not in a condition to sit down and entertain a young lady with flippant and elegant nothings. However, there was already a rustling at the other end of the room, and three ladies advanced towards us. First, Mrs. Clarendon, a ripe, buxom blond of forty, in dark-blue silk,—altogether a cheery apparition. Then the niece, Miss Weldon, tall, slender, with a long face, high forehead, black eyes, and smooth, dark hair. She had the air of a daughter, which I presume she was, by adoption. Mr. Clarendon had but one child, a son, who was then at Harvard. Miss Weldon's friend, as I judged her to be, was a Miss Haworth (I think that was the name—I know it reminded me of Mary Chaworth), a quiet creature, with violet eyes, and light hair, rippled on the temples. Her face seemed singularly familiar to me, and yet I knew I had never seen her before. I mutely bowed to both the young ladies, and then turned to answer a remark of Mrs. Clarendon, inwardly rejoicing that she had saved me from them.

Mr. Severn presently entered, carrying his unhappy face even to the festive board. He had the air of being, as he perhaps was, permanently overworked, and was afflicted with the habit, which he exercised unconsciously, of frequently putting his hand on his side and heaving a deep sigh. Yet he was a shrewd, intelligent fellow; and, although usually a languid, hesitating talker, there were accidental moments when he flashed into respectable brilliancy. After the greetings were over, I was glad to see that he addressed himself to the niece, leaving Mrs. Clarendon to me.

It was a quarter past six, and Mr. Clarendon began to show signs of impatience. "Withering stays," said he to his wife; "as for Brandagee, I should not much wonder if he had forgotten all about it. He seems to have the run of a great many houses."

A violent ringing of the bell followed his words, and the two delinquents entered together. I already knew Mr. Withering, and felt grateful to him for his kindly notice of my volume, but he was not otherwise attractive to me. He was a man of thirty-six,

with a prematurely dry, solemn air. He wore a full, dark-brown beard, and his thick hair was parted in the middle, so as to hide two curious knobs on his temples. I used to wonder what Miss Hitchcock would predict from those organs: I was sure there were no bumps of the kind on my own skull. Perhaps they represented the critical faculty; for Mr. Withering never wrote anything but notices of books. He read all the English reviews, and was quite a cyclopædia of certain kinds of information; but, somehow, a book, in passing through his alembic, seemed to exhale its finer aroma, to part with its succulent juices, and become more or less mummified. Names, at the sound of which I felt inclined to bow the knee, rattled from his tongue as drily as salts and acids from a chemist's; and I never conversed with him without feeling that my imaginative barometer had fallen several degrees.

Mr. Brandagee was barely known to me by name. He was the author of several dashing musical articles, which had been published in the 'Wonder,' during the opera season, and had created a temporary sen-

sation. Since then he had assailed Mr. Bellows, the great tragedian, in several sketches characterized rather by wit and impertinence than profound dramatic criticism: but everybody read and enjoyed them none the less. He was said to be the scion of a rich and aristocratic family in New-Haven, had passed through college with high honours, and afterwards spent several years and a moderate fortune in rambling all over Europe and the East. He had now adopted journalism, it was reported, as an easy mode of making his tastes and his talents support him in such splendour as was still possible.

He made his salutations with a jolly self-possession—a noisy, flashy glitter of sentences—which quite threw the rest of us into the shade. The ladies, I saw, were specially interested in making his acquaintance. When dinner was announced, he carried off Mrs. Clarendon, without waiting for the host's beckon or looking behind him. Mr. Withering followed with Miss Weldon, and then Mr. Clarendon offered his arm to Miss Haworth. Severn, pressing his side, and heaving profound sighs, brought up the rear

with me. I hastened to take the unoccupied seat at Mrs. Clarendon's left hand, though it did not properly belong to me. The lady was too well-bred even to look her dissatisfaction, and Mr. Withering was thus interposed between me and the niece.

My share of the entertainment was easily performed. Mr. Brandagee, on the opposite side, monopolized the conversation from the start, and I had nothing to do but look and listen, in the intervals of the dinner. The man's face interested me profoundly. It was not handsome, it could hardly be called intellectual, it was very irregular: I could almost say that it was disagreeable, and yet, it was so mobile, it ran so rapidly through striking contrasts of expression, and was so informed with a restless, dazzling life, that I could not turn my eyes away from it. His forehead was sloping, narrowing rapidly from the temples down to the brows, his eyes dark-gray and deeply set, and his nose very long and straight, the nostrils cut back sharply on either side, like the barbs of an arrow. His upper lip was very short, and broken in from the line of his profile, as if he

had been kicked there by a horse when a child. It was covered with a moustache no thicker than an eyebrow,—short, stubby hairs, that seemed to resist growth, and resembled, at a little distance, a coarse black powder. The under lip and chin, on the contrary, projected considerably, and the latter feature terminated in a goat-like tuft of hair. His cheeks were almost bare of beard. When he spoke slowly, his voice seemed to catch somewhere in the upper jaw and be diverted through his nose, but as he became lively and spirited in conversation, it grew clear and shrill. It was not an agreeable voice: the deep, mellow chest-notes were wanting.

The impression he made upon me was just the reverse of what I had felt on first meeting Penrose. The latter repelled me, in spite of the strong attraction of his beauty; but Mr. Brandagee repelled me in every feature, yet at the same time drew me towards him with a singular fascination. His language was bold, brilliant, full of startling paradoxes and unexpected grotesquenesses of fancy; withal, he was so agile and adroit of fence that it was

almost impossible to pin him except by weapons similar to his own. It seemed to me that Mr. Clarendon at once admired and disliked him. The ladies, however, were evidently captivated by his brilliancy, and helped him to monopolize the attention of the table.

He had just completed a very witty and amusing description of Alexandre Dumas; and there was a lull in the talk, while a wonderful *mayonnaise* was brought upon the table, when Miss Weldon, bending around Mr. Withering, addressed him with,—

“Oh, Mr. Brandagee, did you ever hear Rubini?”

“I *did*,” said he. “Not on the stage. I’m hardly old enough for that, if you please. But when I was living in Turin, I called one evening on my old friend, Silvio Pellico, and found him dressed to go out. Now I knew that he lived like a hermit,—I had never seen him before in swallow-tails,—so I started back and said, ‘*Cos’ è?*’ ‘To Count Arrivamale’s,’ says he, ‘and only for Rubini’s sake.’ ‘Will Rubini be there?’ I yelled; ‘hold on a minute!’ I took the first *fiacre* I could find, gave the fellow five

lire extra, galloped home and jumped into my conventionalities, snatched up Silvio, and off we drove to Arrivamale's together. True enough, Rubini was there, old and well preserved, but he sang—and I heard him !”

“What did you think of his singing?” asked the delighted Miss Weldon.

“All *foriture*. The voice was in rags and tatters, but the method was there. You know how Beneditti sings the *finale* of Lucia?—lifting up his fists and carrying the *sostenuto* the whole breadth of the stage;—well, Rubini would have kept it dancing up and down, and whirling round and round, like a juggler with four brass balls in the air. That was what he sang, and I shall never forget the *bell' alma innamorata*—ha-ha-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-ah-ha-ha-ta !”

There was a general shout of laughter at this burlesque imitation of poor Rubini, which Mr. Brandagee gave in a cracked falsetto. There seemed to be no end to his accomplishments. After taking a forkful of the *mayonnaise*, he turned to Mrs. Clarendon with an enthusiastic face, exclaiming,

“Admirable! I congratulate you on your cook; or is Mr. Clarendon himself the author? It is a part of my *credo* that the composition of a salad requires a high order of intellect, as well as character, tact, and the instincts of a gentleman. Horace, Cervantes, and Shakspeare would have been good hands at it; St. Paul would have done it splendidly!”

In spite of what had gone before, I was startled and shocked at this, and I believe Mrs. Clarendon did not like the irreverence. But Mr. Brandagee rattled on without regarding her,—“It isn’t modest in me to proclaim my own skill, but, then, nobody ever accused me of modesty. Modesty is an inconvenient article for gentlemen’s use. I am prouder of my triumph at the *Trois Frères* than of anything else in my life. There were only three of us,—Paul de Kock and poor Alfred de Musset. When we came to the salad I saw their eyes sparkle; so much the better—I had planned a surprise. So I picked up the dish, turned it around, smelled it suspiciously, pulled it about a little with a fork, and then said to the *garçon*, ‘*Otez ça!*’ I wish you could have seen

their faces; I am sure De Kock ground '*barbare*!' between his teeth. But I promised to give them a substitute, started them on their old, everlasting dispute about the battle of Zara,—one maintained that there had been such a battle, and the other that there hadn't—got the ingredients I wanted, and set to work. They were hard at it, throwing Barbarossa and Dandolo, and I don't know who else, across the table at each other's heads, when I put their plates before them, and said, '*Essayez*!' Each of them made a grimace, and took a little morsel with an air of suspicion. When they had fairly tasted it, they looked at each other for a full minute without saying a word. Then De Kock drew a long breath and cried out, '*Incroyable*!' and De Musset answered, '*Énorme*!' We shook hands all around, with tears in our eyes, and always *tutoyed* each other from that very night. Poor De Musset!"

After the ladies had withdrawn, cigars were brought on the table. Mr. Clarendon, I noticed, did not smoke, and I thought he seemed pleased that I followed his example. Mr. Severn and Mr. Withering

puffed their cigars delicately and cautiously, and drew nearer to their chief, while Mr. Brandagee, blowing a great cloud, poured out a glass of claret and then pushed the decanter across to me.

"They are talking over 'Wonder' matters," he said, taking Mrs. Clarendon's chair. "That is very fair Lafitte; try it. But I prefer Clos-Vougeot after dinner."

I took a glass of the wine rather than confess my ignorance of the proper thing, in the presence of such an authority.

"By the way," he asked, "are you the Mr. Godfrey who has just published a volume of poems? I read Withering's notice of it; I wish you would send me a copy."

I gratefully promised to comply.

"I think we all begin in that way. I published, in my senior year, 'Alcibiades at Syracuse';—don't say you've heard of it, because I know you haven't. I have not seen the thing for ten years; but I dare say it's insufferable trash. Poetry doesn't pay. Do you know there are not six poets in the world who could live on the profits of their verses?"

"But it is not money alone,"—I began, and then stopped, seeing the ends of his projecting under-lip curl around the ends of the short upper one, in a peculiar, mocking smile. I felt instantly how green and sentimental I must appear in his experienced eyes.


"I know all you were going to say," he remarked, noticing my silence. "I was tarred with the same brush, ages ago. It's pretty well scrubbed out of me, but I recognize the smell. You believe in fame, in a sort of profane coming-down of the fiery tongues, don't you? You've been anointed, and shampooed, and brushed, and combed by some barber-Apollo, for an elegant 'mission,' haven't you? And the unwashed and uncombed multitude will turn up their noses and scent you afar off, and say to each other, 'Let us stand aside that The Poet may pass!'"

I was too dazzled by the grotesque fancy of the image to feel much hurt by its irony. On the contrary, I was curious to know what a man, whose youth, he confessed, had known dreams similar to mine, now thought of Literature and of Life; after

such a large experience of both. I therefore laughed, and said, "I don't expect any such recognition as that;—but is it not better to have some faith in the work you undertake? Could any one be a good poet who despised his mission, instead of believing in it?"

"The greatest poet of this generation," he said, "is Heine, who isn't afraid to satirize himself,—who treats his poetic faculty very much as Swift treated Celia. The mission, and the anointing, and all that, are pleasant superstitions, I admit; but one can't live in the world and hold on to them. The man who isn't afraid to look at the naked truth, under all this surface flummery, is the master. You believe, I suppose, that all men are naturally kind, and good, and honest,—that politicians are pure patriots, and clergymen are saints, and merchants never take advantage of each other's necessities,—that all married couples love each other, and all young lovers will be true till death"—

I could not bear this. My blood was up, and I interrupted him with a passionate earnestness which



contrasted strangely with the cold-blooded, negligent cynicism of his manner.

"I am not quite such a fool as that," I said. "I believe that men, and women too, are naturally selfish and bad. I have no particular respect for them; and if I should desire fame, it would only be for the sake of making them respect me."

He looked at me more attentively than before, and I felt that his keen gray eyes were beginning to spy out my secret wound. I took another sip of the claret, in the hope of turning aside his scrutiny. This movement, also, he seemed to understand, but could not resist imitating it. He filled his glass, emptied it, and then turned to me with,—

"So, you would like to be respected by those for whom you have no respect. What satisfaction is there in that?"

"Not much, I know," I answered; "but if they honoured me for saying what I feel to be true and good, I should think better of them."

"Ho, ho! *That's* it, is it? Your logic is equal to the puzzle of Epimenides and the Cretans. You

despise men; therefore they respect you; therefore you respect them. I shouldn't wonder if you had gone through the converse experience, to arrive at such a conclusion."

I was quite bewildered by his rapid, flashy sentences, and knew not how to reply. Besides, I saw how keenly he tracked my expressions back to their source in my life, and made a feeble effort to throw him off the scent.

"Then you don't think a literary reputation is worth having?" I said.

"By all means; it is positive capital, in a certain way. It makes publishers indorse your promissory notes, opens the doors of theatres and opera-houses to you, supplies you with dinners without end, gives you the best rooms in hotels,—sometimes complimentary passes on steamboats and railways: in the words of the pious, smooths the asperities of this life, and does you no harm in the world beyond the grave. I shouldn't in the least object to those advantages. But if only the schoolgirls weep over my pages, and pencil the words 'sweet!' and 'beau-

tiful !' on the margin, their tears and their remarks won't butter my bread. I'd rather sit on velvet, like Reynolds the Great, propped up by forty-seven flash romances, than starve, like Burns, and have the pilgrims come to kneel on my bones. Fame's a great humbug. 'Who hath it?—he that died o' Wednesday !' ”

I was not prepared to disagree with him. His words gave direction to the reflux of my feelings from their warm, trusting outflow. I acknowledged the authority which his great knowledge of life conferred ; and though his hard, mocking tone still affected me unpleasantly, I was desirous to hear more of views which might one day be my own.

“ Then there is no use in having any ambition ? ” I remarked.

“ *Cela dépend.* If a man feels the better for it, let him have it. Théophile Gautier used to say, there are but three divinities—Youth, Wealth, and Beauty. Substitute Health for Beauty, and I agree with him. I have no beauty ;—I'm as ugly as sin, but I don't find that it makes any difference, either with women

or men. Give me health and wealth, and I'll be as handsome as the Antinous. One must get old some day; but even then, what is given to youth can be bought for age. Hallo! the Lafitte is out. Stretch down your arm and get the other decanter. Severn won't miss it."

I did as he requested, and Mr. Clarendon, noticing the movement, got up and took a seat near me. "Brandagee," he said, "I hope you have not been putting any mischief into Godfrey's head."

"I have none to spare," he replied. "I am keeping it bottled up for my article on Mrs. Pudge in Ophelia. By-the-by, it's nine o'clock. I must go down to Niblo's to see her once more in the mad scene. These are capital Figaros, Mr. Clarendon. I'll take another, to give me a start on the article."

He took *six*, went into the drawing-room to take leave of the ladies, and departed.

"A brilliant fellow," said Mr. Clarendon, "but spoiled by over-praise when young, and indulgence abroad."

"He's good company, though," said Severn.

As for myself, I found myself mentally repeating his words, on the way home. Youth, health, and wealth—was he not right? What else was there to be enjoyed,—at least for me?

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH I ATTEND MRS. YORKTON'S RECEPTION.

A FEW days after the dinner, Mr. Brandagee, being in the 'Wonder' office to read the proof of his article on Mrs. Pudge, came to my desk and entered into conversation. I had just completed my graphic description of the fall, death, and removal of an omnibus-horse on the slippery pavement of Broadway (an item afterwards copied in all the country papers), and had half an hour to spare, in the course of which time quite a pleasant familiarity was established between us. He had looked over my book, which he pronounced better than "Alcibiades at Syracuse," to the best of his recollection. As he was leaving, he said,—

"Do you go to Mrs. Yorkton's on Friday evening?"

"Mrs. Yorkton?"

"Yes—the poetess. Though she mostly writes under the signature of 'Adeliza Choate.'"

Was it possible? Adeliza Choate,—the rival of my boyish ambition,—the sister of my first poetic dreams! I had always imagined her as a lovely, dark-eyed girl, with willowy tresses and a lofty brow. And she was Mrs. Yorkton,—married, and giving receptions on Friday evenings! That fact seemed to bring her down to common earth,—to obscure the romantic nimbus in which my fancy had enveloped her form; yet I none the less experienced a violent desire to see her.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "I have read her poems, but I do not know her personally. I should very much like to go."

"Nothing easier: I'll take you. Friday night, remember. She lives in Fourth Street, and you may as well call at the Smithsonian for me. Come early. I had a note from her this morning, and she wants me to be there by eight o'clock, to assist her in some

deuce of a mysterious arrangement. She always gets up some sentimental clap-trap or other—'to start conversation in intellectual channels,' she says. You'll find all the literary small fry on hand,—Smithers, Danforth, Clara Collady, and the like. You needn't dress particularly,—it's quite Bohemian. Smithers always wears a scarlet cravat, and an old black velvet coat, with half the buttons off."

This information was rather attractive than otherwise. It denoted a proper scorn of conventionalities, which I had always looked upon as one of the attributes of genius. A side-door, at least, was now opened for me into the enchanted circle which I so longed to enter. The anticipation of the event diverted my mind from its gloomy apathy, and helped me along more swiftly through the weary days.

Fortunately, when the evening arrived, there was no moral, charitable, political, or religious meeting to report,—no pyrotechnic display or torch-light procession to describe,—and I could venture to be absent from the office until midnight, at which time

I was obliged to revise the fires and accidents. Notwithstanding Mr. Brandagee's hint as to costume, I put on my evening dress, and sprinkled my handkerchief with jockey-club. Reaching the Smithsonian at half-past seven, I found my *chaperon* in his room on the third story, reading a volume of Balzac, with his feet on a chair and a mint-julep at his elbow.

"By Jove, I forgot!" he exclaimed, jumping up, "Damn Adeliza Choate and the whole tribe! I'd ten thousand times rather go on with '*La Peau de Chagrin*.' But it won't do to have you get out of your bandbox for nothing, Godfrey. Whew! You have come from Araby the Blest,—will you let me 'pursue your triumph and partake your gale?' Adeliza will have a sonnet 'To J. G.' in the next 'Hesperian,' commencing,—

'On thine ambrosial locks my heart reclines.'

But he changed his coat and brushed his black hair while talking, and we set out for the eastern part of Fourth Street. The Yorkton Mecca was a low and somewhat ancient brick house, with a green

door and window-blinds. Heavy, badly smelling ailanthus-trees in front conveniently obscured the livery-stable and engine-house on the opposite side of the street, and as there happened to be no fires at the time, and no carriages in requisition, the place had a quiet, contemplative air. The bell was answered by a small mulatto-boy, whose white jacket and trousers were ornamented with broad red stripes down the arms and legs, giving him the air of a little harlequin.

He grinned on seeing Mr. Brandagee, said, "She's in the parlour," and threw open the door thereto.

Only one gas-burner was yet lighted, but, as the rooms were small, I could very well observe the light-blue figure which advanced to meet us. Heavens and earth! where was the lovely creature with dark eyes and willowy tresses? I saw, to my unutterable surprise, a woman of forty-five, tall, lean, with a multitude of puckers about her yellowish-gray eyes, and long thin lips. On her faded brown hair she wore a wreath of blue flowers. Her nose was aquiline, and her neck seemed to throw out strong

roots in the direction of her shoulders. As I looked at the back of it, afterwards, I could not help thinking I saw a garland of forget-me-nots laid on the dry, mossy stump of a sapling.

"Faithful friend! Fidus Achates!" (which she pronounced *Akkatees*), she exclaimed, holding out both hands to Brandagee. "You are just in time. Adonis," (this to the striped mulatto-boy,) "light the other burners!"

"You know you can always depend upon me, Adeliza," Brandagee replied, with a side-wink to me; "I consider myself as your *fidibus*. Let me present to you my friend, Mr. Godfrey, whose name is familiar to you, no doubt, as one of our dawning bards,—'Leonora's Dream, and Other Poems.'"

"Is it possible? This is an unexpected acquisition to our circle of choice spirits. Mr. Godfrey! I am delighted to make your acquaintance. I have long known and admired your poetical self: we are fellow-Hesperians, you know."

Though I was so confounded by the reality of Adeliza's appearance, I could not help being flattered

by the warmth of her reception. I glowed with gratified vanity, as I took her offered hand, and said I was very happy to meet Miss Choate, whose poems I had read with so much pleasure.

Brandagee burst into a laugh at my blunder, which I also perceived, the moment after it was uttered. Much embarrassed, I stammered some awkward words of apology.

Mrs. Yorkton, however, was rather pleased than offended.

"No apology is necessary, Mr. Godfrey," she said: "I am quite as accustomed to my poetic as to my prosaic name. I adopted the former when I first began to write, on account of the prejudice which The Herd manifests when a woman's hand dares to sweep the strings of the Delphic lyre. But the secret was soon discovered by those friends who knew my Inner Self, and they still like to address me by what they call my 'Parnassian name.'"

By this time the remaining burners had been lighted, and all the features of this bower of the Muses were revealed to view. The furniture was

well worn, and had apparently been picked up piece by piece, without regard to the general harmony. Over the front mantelpiece hung a portrait in crayons of the hostess, with a pen in her hand, and her eyes uplifted. On a small table between the windows stood a large plaster bust of Virgil, with a fresh wreath of periwinkle (plucked from the back yard) upon its head. On the two centre tables were laid volumes of poetry, and some annuals, bound in blue and scarlet cloth. The most remarkable feature of the room, however, was a series of four oblong black-boards, suspended like picture-frames on the walls, each one bordered with a garland of green leaves. Upon two of these there were sentences written with chalk; the other two were still empty.

"There, Mr. Brandagee!" she exclaimed, waving her thin arm with an air of triumph; "that is my idea for to-night. Don't you think it suggestive? Instead of pictures, a pregnant sentence on each of these dark tablets. It seems to symbolize Thought starting out in white light from the midnight of

Ignorance. Words give mental pictures, you know, and I want to have these filled up by distinguished masters. Come, and I'll show you what I have done!"

She led the way to the farthest black-board, stationed herself before it, with Brandagee on one side and myself on the other, and resumed her explanation. "This *I* have written," she said, "not because I could not find any sentence adapted to the purpose, but because my friends seem to expect that I should always offer them some intellectual food. '*Congenial Spirits Move in Harmonious Orbits*,'—how do you like it? There must be a great deal of meaning compressed into a very few words, you know,—oracular, suggesting various things. Now, I want to have the same thought, or a kindred one, in other languages, on the other boards. The next, you see, is French, but I can't go any further without your help. What do you think of this?"

"'*Les beaux esprits se rencontrent*,' " read Brandagee. "Very appropriate, indeed! Not only abstractly true, but complimentary to your guests. And you

want the same thing in other languages,—what languages?”

“One must be German, of course,” said she. “Can’t you remember something from Schiller, or Goethe, or Rikter?”

“I have it! Give me the chalk. Your own Orphic utterance reproduced in the immortal words of Goethe! Did you know it?—the finest line in ‘Faust;’—what a singular coincidence of genius!”

Taking the chalk from the ready hand of the delighted Mrs. Yorkton, Brandagee wrote on the third black-board: “*Gleiches gesellt sich gern mit Gleichem!*” I understood the words, and was a little at a loss to account for his enthusiasm about them.

“Now for the last!” said he. “It must be Italian, Spanish, Swedish, or Dutch. I might take a line from Dante,—‘*Lasciate ogni speranza,*’ and so forth, but that would be too palpable to some of the *beaux esprits*. You want something more vague and mystical. Who is there,—Tegner, Calderon, Lope de Vega?—Calderon is best, and now I recall the very

sentence for you. There it is, white on black :
‘*Cada oveja ha sin pareja.*’”

“It has a lovely sound,” she murmured ; “what is the meaning?”

“Something like this,” he answered : “‘No gentle creature is condemned to solitude,’”—but he afterwards whispered to me that the sentence actually read : “Every sheep has its fellow.”

Mrs. Yorkton grasped his hands with gratitude, and twice made the circuit of the rooms to inspect, with radiant satisfaction, her suggestive mental pictures. Then, as Brandagee had flung himself into a chair, and was tossing over the leaves of the annuals, she invited me to take a seat beside her on the sofa.

“Tell me now, Mr. Godfrey,” said she, “what is your usual process of composition? I don’t mean the fine frenzy, because all poets must have *that*, of course ; but *how* do you write, and when do you find the combination of influences most favourable? It is a subject which interests me greatly ; my own temperament is so peculiar. Indeed, I have found

no one upon whom the Inspiration seizes with such power. Does it visit you in the garish light of day, or only awake beneath the stars? Must you wear a loose dressing-gown, like Mr. Danforth, or is your Muse not impeded by the restraints of dress?"

I scarcely knew what answer to make to these questions. In fact, I began strongly to suspect that I was no poet. I had never supposed that any particular time or costume was required for the exercise of the faculty,—had never thought of instituting a series of observations upon myself, for the purpose of determining what conditions were most favourable.

"I am really unable to say," I answered. "I have always been in the habit of writing whenever I felt that I had a good subject, whether by day or night."

"How fortunate!" she exclaimed; "how I envy you! Your *physique* enables you to do it; but with *my* sensitive frame, it would be impossible. I feel the approach of Inspiration in every nerve;—my husband often tells me that he knows beforehand when I am going to write, my eyes shine so. Then

I go up-stairs to my *study*, which is next to my bedroom. It always comes on about three o'clock in the afternoon, when the wind blows from the south. I change my dress, and put on a long white gown, which I wear at no other time, take off my stays, and let my hair down my back. Then I prance up and down the room as if I was possessed, and as the lines come to me I *dash* them on the black-board, one after another, and chant them in a loud voice. Sometimes I cover all four of the boards—both sides—before the Inspiration leaves me. The frail Body is overcome by the excitement of the Soul; and at night my husband often finds me lying on the floor in the middle of the room, panting—panting!”

She gave this information in so wild and excited a manner, flapping her hands up and down before her to illustrate the operation of prancing, hurling forth one arm, and making a convulsive, tremulous line in the air with her closed fingers when she came to dashing the words on the black-board, and panting so very literally at the close, that I began to be alarmed lest the Inspiration was approaching. I

looked at her head, and was reassured on finding that the forget-me-nots still crowned it, and that her hair was not coming down behind.

"I should think it must be very exhausting," I ventured to remark.

"Killing!" she exclaimed, with energy. "I am obliged to take restoratives and stimulants, after one of these visits. It wouldn't be safe for me to have a penknife in the room,—or a pair of scissors,—or a sharp paper-cutter,—while the frenzy is on me. I might injure myself before I knew it. But it would be a sweet, a fitting death. If it ever comes, Mr. Godfrey, you must write my thanatopsis!"

Here Brandagee, sitting at the table with his back to us, startled us by bursting into the most violent laughter. Mrs. Yorkton evidently did not find the interruption agreeable.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in a stiff voice.

"Oh," said he, "these things of Mrs. Mallard. I have just been turning over the 'Female Poets.' The editor has given her ten pages. I wonder what

she paid him; there *must* have been an equivalent."

"Ten pages, indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Yorkton, with bitterness, "and barely *three* for me! That is the way literature is encouraged. How anybody can find the traces of Inspiration in Mrs. Mallard's machinery—I won't call it poetry—I cannot comprehend. I am told, Mr. Brandagee, that she has become very spiteful, since my receptions have made a noise in the literary world."

"I don't doubt it. Detraction and Envy are the inevitable attendants of Genius. But the Eagle should not be annoyed at the hostile gyrations of the Vulture."

"What grand dashes of thought you strike out!" she cried, in an excess of delight and admiration. "That image would close a sonnet so finely. If it should return to my mind, hereafter, in some Inspired Moment, you will know whose hand planted the Seeds of Song."

"You don't know what a poet I am!" he said, in his mocking way. "If I dared to write. Dr. Brown-

Sequard said to me one day, in Paris, when he was attending me for the rupture of a blood-vessel, caused by writing a poem on hearing a nightingale singing in Rue Nôtre Dame de Lorette,—said he, ‘Brandagee, my boy, avoid these exaltations, if you don’t want to bring up at Père la Chaise or Charenton. Your nature is overbalanced: you must drop the spiritual and cultivate the animal.’ It was a hard sentence; but I wanted to live, and I was forced to obey.”

He heaved a deep sigh, which was echoed, in all seriousness, by Mrs. Yorkton. I admired the amazing command of face and manner, which enabled him to perpetrate such barefaced irony, without exciting her suspicion. It was evident that she both believed and admired him.

The arrival of guests interrupted the conversation. Two gentlemen and a lady entered the room. I recognized Mr. Smithers at once, by the scarlet cravat and velvet coat; the others, as Mrs. Yorkton whispered before presenting me, were “appreciative sympathizers, not authors.” The black-board an-

swered their purpose by furnishing immediate subjects for talk, and I got on very well with the appreciative sympathizers. Presently Mr. Danforth arrived, escorting Clara Collady, and followed by Mr. Bluebit, a sculptor, and Mr. S. Mears, a painter. Brandagee persisted in calling the latter "Smears." I looked curiously at the gentleman who could only write in a loose dressing-gown, and found the peculiarity intelligible, supposing he usually went as tightly clad as at present. His coat was buttoned so that there were horizontal creases around the waist, and the seams were almost starting, and it seemed impossible for him to bend forward his head without having respiration suspended by his cravat. Whenever he nodded in conversation, his whole body, from the hips upward, shared the movement.

Clara Collady was a dumpy person of twenty-eight or thirty, with a cheerful face and lively little black eyes. I sought an introduction to her, and soon found that we were mutually ignorant of each other's works. I was surprised to learn that her name was genuine and not "Parnassian." She was disposed to

enjoy the society without criticising its separate members, or suspecting any of them of the crime of overlooking her own literary importance.

"I like to come here," she said. "It rests and refreshes me, after a week in the school-room. Mrs. Yorkton is sometimes a little too anxious to show people off, which I think is unnecessary. They are always ready enough to do it without instigation. But it is very pleasant to say and do what you please, and I find that I generally learn something. I couldn't aspire to the higher literary circles, you know."

Loud talking, near at hand, drew my attention. It was Smithers engaged in a discussion with S. Mears.

"Classical subjects are dead—obsolete—antediluvian!" cried the former. "Take the fireman, in his red flannel shirt, with the sleeves rolled up to his shoulders,—the clam-fisher, bare-legged on the sea-shore,—the wood-chopper,—the street-sweeper; where will you find anything more heroic?"

"Very good for *genre*," said S. Mears, "but you wouldn't call it High Art?"

"It's the Highest, sir! Form and Action, in their


grand primitive sublimity ! That's the mistake you painters make ; you go on for ever painting leather-faced Jeromes, and Magdalens with tallow bosoms, instead of turning to Life ! Life's the thing ! A strong-backed 'long-shore-man, with his hairy and sunburnt arms, and the tobacco-juice in the corners of his mouth, is worth all your saints !"

"Very well," said S. Mears ; "will you let me paint yourself, with vine-leaves in your hair, and only a bit of goat-skin around your loins ? I'll call it Silenus. You'll have your 'Life,' and I'll have my classic subject."

Mr. Smithers was evidently getting angry, and would have hotly retorted, but for the interposition of Mr. Bluebit, who took an arm of each and shook them good-humouredly, saying, "Congenial spirits move in harmonious orbits." Brandagee, also, had been attracted by the voices, and joined the group. The other three gentlemen, I noticed, treated him with a cautious deference, as if they had been pricked by his tongue and did not wish to repeat the sensation.

Other guests dropped in, by ones and twos, until the small apartments were well filled, and the various little centres of animated talk blended in an incessant and not very harmonious noise. Mrs. Yorkton seemed to consider me as an acquisition to her circle,—probably because it embraced more “appreciative sympathizers” than authors,—and insisted on presenting me to everybody, as “one of our dawning bards.” The kindly cordiality with which I was received awoke my benumbed ambition, and cheated me into the belief that I had already achieved an enviable renown.

While I was talking to a very hirsute gentleman,—Mr. Ponder, who wrote short philosophical essays for ‘The Hesperian,’—I heard a familiar female voice behind me. Turning round, I beheld the nose, the piercing Oriental eyes, and the narrow streak of a forehead of Miss Levi, whom I had not seen since Winch’s reconciliation ball. She was dressed in a dark maroon-coloured silk, and the word “Titianesque!” which I heard S. Mears address to his friend Bluebit, must have been spoken of her. Among so



many new faces she impressed me like an old acquaintance, and I bowed familiarly as soon as I caught her eye. To my surprise, she returned the salutation with an uncertain air, in which there was but half-recognition.

"How have you been, since we met at Mr. Winch's?" I asked, taking a vacant seat beside her.

"Oh, very true! It was *there* we met: I remember the song you sang. What a pity Mrs. Yorkton has no piano!"

I was too much disconcerted by the mistake to set her right; but Mrs. Yorkton, beholding us, bent down her forget-me-nots and whispered, "And you never told me, Miss Levi, that you knew Mr. Godfrey! Why did you not bring him into our circle before?"

Miss Levi cast a side-glance at me, recalled my personality, and answered, with perfect self-possession, "Oh, I think poets should find their way to each other by instinct. I can understand them, though I may not be of them. Besides, *he* is false and faithless. You know you are, Mr. Godfrey: you are like a bee, going from flower to flower."

“Which is worse, Miss Levi,” I asked,—“the bee that visits many flowers, or the flower that entertains many bees?”

She spread her fan, covered the lower part of her face with it, and fixed me with her powerful eyes, while Mrs. Yorkton nodded her head and observed, “An admirable antithesis!”

“Now, Mr. Godfrey,” Miss Levi resumed, removing her fan, “that is a spiteful remark, and you know it. You must repeat to me your last poem, before I can forgive you.”

“Pray do!” cried Mrs. Yorkton, clasping her hands in entreaty. “Let *us* be the first to welcome it, before you cast it forth to the hollow echoes of the world. Mr. Danforth has promised to read to us the first act of his new tragedy, and your poem will be a lyrical prelude to the sterner recitation.”

But I was steadfast in my refusal. I had written nothing since the publication of my volume; and how was I to utter to the ears of others the words of love which had become a mockery to my own heart? The controversy drew the eyes of others upon us,

until Brandagee came to my rescue, by proclaiming his own lack of modesty, and demanding a test upon the spot.

“What shall it be?” he asked: “a recitation, a lyrical improvisation, or an extemporaneous dramatic soliloquy? There’s no difference between writing a thing for others to read, and speaking it for others to hear. Poetry is only a habit of the mind—a little practice makes it come as pat as prose. There was my friend, Von Struensee, the great composer, who took it into his head, when he was fifty years old, to write the librettos of his own operas. Never had attempted a line of poetry before; so he began by lifting the calf, and it wasn’t long before he could shoulder the ox. The first day he wrote two lines; the second, four; the third, eight; the fourth, sixteen; doubling every day until he could do eighteen hundred lines without stopping to take breath. Do you know that Sir Egerton Brydges wrote fourteen thousand sonnets, and I have no doubt they were as good as Cardinal Bembo’s, who took forty days to a single one. Give me an inspiring subject,—the

present occasion, for instance, or an apostrophe to our talented hostess,—and I'll turn out the lines faster than you can write them."

The proposal was hailed with acclamation, and the little interval which occurred in choosing a subject gave Brandagee time to collect his thoughts for the work. He had skilfully suggested a theme, which, having been mentioned, could not well be overlooked, and, to Mrs. Yorkton's intense satisfaction, she became his inspiration. He rattled off with great rapidity a string of galloping lines, in which there was not much cohesion, but plenty of extravagant compliment and some wit. However, it passed as a marvellous performance, and was loudly applauded.

Other subjects were immediately suggested, considerably to Mr. Danforth's annoyance. This gentleman had been fidgeting about the room uneasily, with one hand in his pocket, occasionally drawing forth a roll of paper tied with red ribbon, and then thrusting it back again. Brandagee, perceiving the movement, said,—

"Do not run the Pierian fountain dry all at once, I beg of you. But, if Mr. Danforth will allow me, I will read the portion of his tragedy with which he intends to favour us. I flatter myself that I can do justice to his diction."

The proposal met with favour from all except the author. Thrusting the roll deeper into his pocket, and stiffening his head angrily, he protested that no one could or should read his own manuscript except himself. Besides, he had not positively promised that the company should hear it; the plot was not yet developed, and hence the situations would not be properly understood. It would be better, perhaps, if he waited until the completion of the second act.

"Wait until all five are finished!" said Mr. Smithers. "It is a bad plan to produce your torsos; I never knew of any good to come of it. Give me the complete figure,—bone, muscle, and drapery, and *then* I'll tell you what it is!"

Brandagee seconded Mr. Smithers's views so heartily that the postponement of the reading was

soon accepted, as a matter of course, by the company. Mr. Danforth was consequently in a very ill humour for the rest of the evening. He would have gone home at once but that Clara Collady, whom he escorted, declared that she was very well pleased with the entertainment and was determined to remain.

Adonis now reappeared with a tray, and we were regaled with cups of weak tea, and cakes of peculiar texture. Under the influence of these stimulants, harmony was restored, and the orbits of the congenial spirits ceased to clash. The midnight reports of fires and accidents called me away soon afterwards, and I tore myself from Miss Levi's penetrating eyes, and Mrs. Yorkton's clutching hands, promising to return on successive Friday evenings. Brandagee left with me, satisfied, as he said, with having "choked off Danforth."

As I was leaving the room, I caught sight of a mild, diminutive gentleman, seated alone in the corner nearest the door. He was looking on and listening, with an air of modest enjoyment. None of the others seemed to notice him, and I suspected

that he had been even forgotten by Adonis and the tea-tray. Catching my eye, he jumped up briskly, shook hands, and said :—

“Very much obliged to you for the call. Come again!” It was Mr. Yorkton.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH I ENTER GENTEEL SOCIETY AND MEET
MY RELATIVES.

WHEN the first bitterness of my humiliation and disappointment had subsided, and the conviction penetrated my mind that it might still be possible for me to take a moderate delight in life, I found that I had quite broken loose from my youthful moorings and was more or less adrift, both in faith and morals. I do not mean that I was guilty of actual violations of my early creed: my life was so far correct, through the negative virtue of habit; but I was in that baseless condition where a strong current—not much matter from what side it came—might have carried me far enough to settle the character of my

future life. I have always considered it a special blessing that so much of my time was given to responsible and wearying labour in those days. I retained my position on the 'Wonder,' because I had not sufficient energy to seek an easier situation, and no desire to try new associations. The variety of my work prevented steady thought, and I found less difficulty in escaping from the contemplation of my wrongs. Not yet, however, was I able to congratulate myself on the treachery which had released my heart from a mistaken bond.

I attended Mrs. Yorkton's receptions quite regularly for some weeks. As the steady summer heats came on, her bower was partly deserted; the artists and authors having gone into the rural districts and taken many of the "appreciative sympathizers" with them. Miss Levi departed, early in July, for "old Long Island's sea-girt shore" (as she remarked). I afterwards discovered that she meant Fire Island. It was at once a relief and a regret to me, when she left. I began to enjoy the sham skirmishes of sentiment in which we indulged, especially as there

was no likelihood of either being damaged by the pastime; and, on the other hand, I was a little afraid of her bewildering glances, which seemed to increase in frequency and power of fascination every time we met.

Brandagee did not again attend. He left the city, soon after our acquaintance commenced, for a tour of the watering-places, and his sharp, saucy, brilliant letters from Newport and Saratoga took the place of his dramatic criticisms in the columns of the 'Wonder.' I prevailed on Swansford to accompany me, on two occasions, and Mrs. Yorkton was very grateful. Music, she said, had not yet been represented in her society, and she was delighted to be able to present what she called "The Wedded Circle of the Arts," although certain that Mrs. Mallard would be furious when she should hear of it. The thinness of the attendance during the dog-days gave me an opportunity to cultivate Mr. Yorkton's acquaintance, and the modest little man soon began to manifest a strong attachment for me.

"Bless you, Mr. Godfrey!" he said, I don't know

how many times, "I s'pose I'm of no consequence to you Genusses, but I *do* like to exchange a friendly word with a body. These is all distinguished people, and I'm proud to entertain 'em. It does credit to Her—I can see that. I'm told you can't find sich another Galaxy of Intellex, not in New York. A man in *my* position has a right to be proud o' that."

Although he often referred to his position in the same humble manner, I never ascertained what it was. When I ventured to put forth a delicate reconnaissance, he looked at his wife, as if expecting a warning glance, and I then surmised that she had prohibited him from mentioning the subject.

I made but little progress in my literary career during this time. Not more than seventy-five copies of my book had been sold; and although the publisher did not seem to be at all surprised at this result, I confess I was. Nevertheless, when I read it again in my changed mood, sneering at myself for the whirler-current of love and tenderness which ran through it,—recalling the hopes with which I had

written, and the visions of happiness it was to herald, —I found there was not left sufficient pride in my performance to justify me in feeling sensitive because it had failed. I contributed two or three stories to 'The Hesperian;' but early in the fall Mr. Jenks became bankrupt, and the magazine passed into other hands. My principal story was published the month this disaster occurred, and it has not been decided to this day, I believe, which party was responsible for the payment. All I understand of the matter is that the payment was never made.

My increased salary, nevertheless, suggested the propriety of living in a somewhat better style than Mrs. Very's domestic circle afforded. It was hard to part from my daily companionship with Swansford but he generously admitted the necessity of the change in my case, and I faithfully promised that we should still see each other twice or thrice a week. It was more difficult to escape from Mrs. Very. "It's an awful breaking up of the family," said she, "and I didn't think you'd serve me so. I've boarded you reasonable, though I say it. I may not be Fashion-

able," (giving a loud sniff at the word), "but I'm Respectable, and that's more!"

At dinner, that day, she made the announcement of my departure in a pleasant voice and with a smiling face. But the constrained vexation broke out in her closing words,—“There's some that stands by me faithful, and some that don't.”

Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer expressed their regret in phrases which the Complete Letter-Writer could not have improved; while Miss Tatting, in whom Impulsiveness waged a continual war with Conventionality, came plumply forth with her real sentiments.

“I see how it is,” said she; “you are getting up in the world, and Hester Street is too much out of the way. It's natural in you, and I don't blame you a bit. I've often said it would turn out so,—haven't I, Martha?”

This was to Miss Dunlap, who glanced at me with a stealthy look of reproach, as she murmured, “Yes, aunt.”

I knew that I was a monster of ingratitude in Mrs. Very's eyes, a fortunate man in the Mortimers', and

a proud one in those of Miss Tatting and her niece. My last dinner in Hester Street was therefore constrained and uncomfortable, and I made all haste to evacuate the familiar attic room. My new residence was the elegant boarding-house of Mrs. De Peyster, in Bleecker Street, west of Broadway. Here I paid six dollars a week for a fourth-story room back, furnished with decayed elegance, having a grate for winter, a mosquito-net for summer, and a small mahogany cabinet and bookcase for all seasons. The latter, in fact, was the lure which had fascinated me, on the day when Mrs. De Peyster, waiting in state in the parlour below, sent me up-stairs with the chambermaid to inspect the room.

When my effects had been transferred to these new quarters, and I had arranged my small stock of books on the shelves, placed my manuscript in the drawers of the cabinet, and seated myself with Wordsworth in an arm-chair at the open window, I seemed to be enveloped at once in an atmosphere of superior gentility. The backyards embraced in my view, were not only more spacious than those under

Swansford's window in Hester Street, but the board-partitions between them were painted, and a row of grape-arbours hid the lower stories of the opposite block. From one of the open windows below me arose the sound of a piano. It was not a favourable post for reading enthusiastic lines about celandines and daffodils, and I frankly admit that I found Wordsworth rather tame.

This was during the half-hour before dinner. When the bell rang, I descended, not to the basement, but to the back-parlour, where Mrs. De Peyster introduced me to my neighbour at the foot of the table, Mr. Renwick, a clerk in an importing house down town. He was a younger, taller, and more elegant variety of the Mortimer type: correctness was his prominent characteristic. There was also a young married couple, a family consisting of father, mother, and two daughters, and four gentlemen of various ages, all bearing the same stamp of unimpeachable propriety. The dinner was a much more solemn affair than at Mrs. Very's. Thin morsels of fish succeeded the soup, and the conversation, com-

mening with the roast and vegetables, in a series of tentative skirmishes, only became fairly established towards the close of the meal.

Mr. Renwick, oblivious of my presence for the first ten minutes after the introduction, suddenly startled me by saying,—

“I see that Erie went up at the Second Board, to-day.”

“Indeed !” I remarked, feeling that a slight expression of surprise would not be out of place ; though what “Erie” was, and why it should go up at the Second Board, was a mystery to me.

“Yes. Five eighths,” said he. Then, as if conscious that he had done his duty, he became silent again until the close of the dessert, when, warming up over a slice of water-melon, he observed, in a lower and more confidential tone,—

“I shouldn’t wonder if the balance of Exchange were on our side before Christmas.”

“What reasons have you for thinking so ?” I asked at random.

“Crops. I always keep the run of *them*.”

"They are very fine, I suppose," I ventured to say, with fear and trembling.

"You mean *here*? Yes. And I see that the prospects of Pork are flattering. Everything combines, you know."

I didn't know in the least, but of course I nodded and looked wise, and said I was glad to hear it. Of all talk I had ever heard, this seemed to me to be the most dreadfully soulless. I looked up the table and listened. The two girls were talking with the young wife about a wonderful poplin at Stewart's,—silver gray with green sprigs; the gentlemen were discussing the relative speed of Scalpel and Oriana; and the heavy mother was lamenting to the attentive Mrs. De Peyster that they had been obliged to leave Newport before the regatta came off, "on account of Mr. Yarrow's business,—the firm never can spare him for more than a month at a time."

How I longed for the transparent pretension of the table in Hester Street, constantly violating the rules of its own demonstrative gentility! For my easy chat with Swansford, for Miss Dunlap's faded

sentiment, Miss Tatting's fearless impulsiveness, and even Mrs. Very's stiffly stereotyped phrases! There, the heavy primitive cooking was digested by the help of lively nothings of talk and the peristaltic stimulus of laughter: here, the respectably dressed viands, appearing in their conventional order of procession, were received with a stately formality which seemed to repel their attempts at assimilation. "Erie" and the "balance of exchange" mixed, somehow, with the vanilla-flavoured *blanc mange*, and lay heavy on my stomach: the prospect of Mr. Renwick's neighbourhood embarrassed and discouraged me, but I could not see that any advantage would be gained by changing my place at the table.

After dinner I hurried across to my old quarters, for the relief of Swansford's company. He laughed heartily at my description of the genteel society into which I was now introduced, and said,—

"Ah, Godfrey, you'll find as I have done that Art spoils you for life. It is the old alternative of God or Mammon: you can't serve two masters. Try it,

if you like, but I see how it will end. I have made my choice, and will stick to it until I die : you think you have made yours, but you have not. You are getting further from Art every day."

I resented this opinion rather warmly, because I felt a suspicion of its truth. I protested that nothing else but Literature was now left me to live for. It was true I had seemed to neglect it of late, but he, Swansford, knew the reason, and ought to be the last man to charge me with apostasy to my lofty intellectual aims. He half smiled, in his sweet, sad way, and gave me his hand.

"Forgive me, Godfrey," he said ; "I didn't mean as much as you supposed. I was thinking of that single-hearted devotion to Art, of which few men are capable, and which, God knows, I should not wish you to possess, unless you were sure that you were destined to reach the highest place. Most authors and artists live in the border land, and make excursions from time to time over the frontier, but there are few indeed who build their dwellings on the side turned away from the world !"

"I understand you now, Swansford," I answered; "and you are right. I am not destined to be one of the highest; don't think that I ever imagined it. I am cast alone on the world. I have been cheated and outraged, as you know. I see Life before me, offering other—lower modes of enjoyment, I will not deny; but where else shall I turn for compensation? Suppose I should achieve fame as an author? I have a little already, and I feel that even the highest would not repay me for what I have lost. I shall not reject any other good the gods provide me. I've tried purity and fidelity of heart, to no purpose. I won't say that I'll try the opposite, now, but you couldn't blame me if I did!"

"Come, Godfrey," said he, "I've written a voluntary for the organist of St. Barnaby's. He paid me to-day, and I have two dollars to spare. We'll go out and have a little supper together."

Which we did, and in the course of which we put the World on its trial, heard all the arguments on either side, rendered (without leaving our seats) a verdict of "Guilty," and invoked the sentence which

we were powerless to inflict. What should I have done without that safety-valve of Swansford's friendship?"

By-and-by I grew more accustomed to my life in Bleeker Street. I found that Mr. Renwick could talk about Mrs. Pudge and the drama, as well as Erie and the Second Board; and that Mr. Blossom, the very same gentleman who had bet ten dollars on Scalpel at the Long Island races, was an enthusiastic admirer of Tennyson. He had a choice library of the English Poets in his room, and occasionally lent me volumes. I learned to read Wordsworth at my window, to the accompaniment of the fashionable redowa on the first-floor piano; and after many days there dawned upon my brain the conviction that there was another kind of poetry than Tom Moore's and Felicia Hemans's.

I grew tolerably skilful in the performance of my labour for the 'Wonder,' having fallen into an unconscious imitation of Brandagee's smart, flashy style, which gave piquancy to my descriptions and reports. Mr. Clarendon was quite satisfied with my perform-

ance, though he let fall a word of warning. "This manner," he said, "is very well for your present department, but, if you want to advance, you must not let it corrupt you entirely."

Thus the summer and part of the autumn passed away, without bringing any occurrence worthy of being recorded. Towards the end of October, however, a sudden and most unexpected pleasure came to cheer me.

I had gone into the St. Nicholas Hotel on some errand connected with my newspaper labours, and was passing out again through the marble-paved lobby, when a gentleman suddenly arose from the row of loungers on the broad, carpet-covered stalls, and stepped before me. A glance of his dark, questioning eyes seemed to satisfy him; he seized my hand, and exclaimed,—

"John Godfrey, is this really you?"

Penrose! my cousin! I had not forgotten him, although our correspondence, after languishing for a few months, had died a natural death before I left Reading. For two years I had heard no word of

him ; and, since my bitter experience of the past summer, had reckoned it as one of the improbable possibilities of life that we should ever meet again. His boyish beauty had ripened into an equally noble manhood. He was taller and stronger limbed, without having lost any of his grace and symmetry. A soft, thick moustache hid the sharp, scornful curve of his upper lip, and threw a shade over the corners of his mouth, and the fitful, passionate spirit which once shot from his eyes had given place to a full, steady ray of power. As I looked at him, I felt proud that the same blood ran in our veins.

We sought out a vacant corner in the reading-room and sat down together. He looked once more into my eyes with an expression of honest affection, which warmed the embers of my schoolboy feeling for him in an instant.

"We should not have lost sight of each other, John," he said. "It was more my fault than yours, I think ; but I never forgot you. I could scarcely believe my eyes when we met, just now. Yours is a

face that would change more than mine. There is not much of the boy left in it. Come, give me your history since you left Dr. Dymond's."

I complied, omitting the most important episode. Penrose heard the story with keen interest, interrupting me only with an ejaculation of "The old brute!" when I related my uncle's management of my inheritance.

"Now," said he, when I had finished, "you shall have my story. There is very little of it. I was twenty, you may remember, when I left the Doctor's school, and went into my uncle's office. I had no expectation of ever receiving any assistance from my father, and worked like a young fellow who has his fortune to make. I believe I showed some business capacity; at least my uncle thought so; and after I came of age my father found it prudent to make an outside show of reconciliation. Matilda insists that the Cook had a hand in it, but I prefer not to believe it. If she had, I rather think she was disappointed at the result; for, when my father died, a year ago, he only left her the legal third. The rest was

divided between Matilda and myself. I'm sure I expected to be cut off with a shilling, but it seems his sense of justice came back to him at the last. His fortune was much less than everybody supposed,—barely a hundred thousand—and I have my suspicions that the Cook laid away an extra share in her own name before his death. It makes no difference to me now; we are well rid of her. Matilda was married a month ago; and, though I can't say that I particularly admire the brother-in-law she has selected for me, I am satisfied that she is out of the hands of that woman."

"Are you living in New York, Alexander?" I asked.

"Not now; but I may fix my home here, very soon. I shall have another motive, old fellow, now that I know you are here. I have a chance of getting into a firm down town, if my little capital can be stretched to meet the sum demanded. I have luxurious tastes,—they are in the Hatzfeld blood, are they not?—and I could not be content to sit down at my age, with my two thousand a year. I suppose I

shall marry some day, and then I must have ten thousand."

It did not surprise me to hear Penrose speak slightly of a fortune which, to me, would have been a splendid competence. It belonged to his magnificent air; and any stranger could have seen that he would certainly acquire whatever his ambition might select as being necessary to his life. I never knew a man who, without genius, so impressed every one with a belief in his powers of commanding success.

As I stretched out my hand to say good-bye, he grasped me by the arm, and said, "You must see Matilda. She is in her private parlour; and I think Shanks, her husband, will be at home by this time."

I had no very strong desire to make the acquaintance of my other cousin, and I suppose Penrose must have read the fact in my face, for he remarked, as we were mounting the stairs, "Now, I remember, there was something in one of Matilda's letters which was not very flattering to you. But I have told her

of our friendship since, and I know that she will be really glad to see you. She has not a bad heart, when you once get down to it; though it seems to me, sometimes, to be as grown over with selfish habits and affectations as a ship's hull with barnacles."

When we entered the private parlour on the third floor, I perceived an elegant figure seated at the window.

"Till," said Penrose, "come here and shake hands with our cousin, John Godfrey!"

"R-really?" she exclaimed, with as much surprise as was compatible with a high-bred air, and the next moment rustled superbly across the room.

"How do you do, cousin?" she said, giving me a jewelled hand. "*Are* you my cousin, Mr. Godfrey? Aleck explained it all to me once how you found out the relationship, somewhere in a wild glen, wasn't it? It was quite romantic, I know, and I envied him at the time. You have the Hatzfeld eyes, certainly, like us. I'm sure I'm very glad to make your acquaintance."

I expressed my own gratification with as much

show of sincerity as I could command. Matilda Shanks was a tall, fine-looking woman, though by no means so handsome as her brother. Her eyes and hair were dark, like his, but her face was longer, and some change in the setting of the features, almost too slight to be defined, substituted an expression of weakness for the strength of his. She must have been twenty-seven, but appeared to be two or three years older,—a result, probably, of the tutorship she had assumed on her stepmother's behalf.

"Well, 'Till," said Penrose, when we had seated ourselves in a triangular group, "do you find him presentable?"

Her eyes had already carefully gone over my person from head to foot. "*Très comme il faut*," she answered; "but I took your word for that, beforehand, Aleck."

"You must know, Godfrey, that Matilda is a perfect dragon in regard to dress, manners, and all the other requisites of social salvation. It's a piece of good luck to pass muster with her, I assure you. I have not succeeded yet."

She was beginning to put in an affected disclaimer when Mr. Shanks entered the room. I saw his calibre at the first glance. The wide trousers, flapping around the thin legs; the light, loose coat, elegantly fitting at the shoulders and just touching its fronts on the narrow ground of a single button; the exquisite collar, the dainty gloves and patent-leather boots, and the gold-headed switch, all proclaimed the fashionable young gentleman, while the dull, lustreless stare of the eyes, the dark bands under them, and the listless, half-closed mouth, told as plainly of shallow brains and dissipated habits. He came dancing up to his wife, put one arm around her neck, and kissed her.

She lifted up her hand and gave his imperial a little twitch, by way of returning the caress, and then said, "Edmund,—my cousin, Mr. Godfrey."

"Ah!" exclaimed Edmund, hastily thrusting an eyeglass into his left eye, and turning towards me. Retaining his hold of the switch with two fingers, he graciously presented me with the other two, as he drawled out, "Very happy, sir."

I was vexed at myself afterwards that I gave him my whole hand. I know of no form of vulgarity so offensive as this offering of a fractional salutation. None but a snob would ever be guilty of it.

A conversation about billiards and trotting-horses ensued; and I broke away in the midst of it, after promising to dine with the Shanks at an early day.


CHAPTER XI.

DESCRIBING MY INTERVIEW WITH MARY MALONEY.

ONE result of my out-door occupation was to make me familiar with all parts of the city. During the first year of my residence I had seen little else than Broadway, from the Battery to Union Square, Chatham Street, and the Bowery. I now discovered that there were many other regions, each possessing a distinct individuality and a separate city-life of its own. From noticing the external characteristics, I came gradually to study the peculiarities of the inhabitants; and thus obtained a knowledge which was not only of great advantage to me in a professional sense, but gave me an interest in men which counteracted, to some extent, the growing cynicism of

my views. Often, when tired of reading and feeling no impulse to write (the greatest portion of my literary energy being now expended on my regular duties), I would pass an idle but not useless hour in wandering around the sepulchral seclusion of St. John's Park, with its obsolete gentility ; or the solid plainness of East Broadway,—home of plodding and prosperous men of business ; or the cosmopolitan rag-fair of Greenwich Street ; or the seething lowest depth of the Five Points ; the proud family aristocracy of Second, or the pretentious moneyed aristocracy of Fifth Avenue,—involuntarily contrasting and comparing these spheres of life, each of which retained its independent motion, while revolving in the same machine.

I will not trouble the reader with the speculations which these experiences suggested. They were sufficiently commonplace, I dare say, and have been uttered several millions of times, by young men of the same age ; but I none the less thought them both original and profound, and considered myself a philosopher, in the loftiest sense of the word. I



imagined that I comprehended the several natures of the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the righteous and the vicious, from such superficial observation,—not yet perceiving, through my own experience, the common flesh and spirit of all men.

One afternoon, as I was slowly returning towards my lodgings from a professional inspection of a new church in Sixth Avenue, I was struck by the figure of a woman, standing at the corner of Bleecker and Sullivan Streets. A woman of the labouring class, dressed in clean but faded calico,—leaning against the area-railing of the corner house, with a weak, helpless appeal expressing itself in her attitude. Her eyes were fixed upon me as I passed, with a steady, imploring gaze, which ran through me, like a palpable benumbing agency, laming my feet as they walked. Yet she said nothing, and could scarcely, I thought, be a beggar. I was well accustomed to the arts of the street-beggars, and usually steeled myself (though with an unconquerable sense of my own inhumanity) against their appeals. Now and then, however, I met with one whom I could not

escape. There was a young fellow, for instance, with both his legs cut off at the thighs, who paddled his way around the Park by means of his hands. I had been told that he was in good circumstances, having received heavy damages from the Hudson River Railroad Company; but I could not stand the supplication of his eyes whenever we met, and was obliged either to turn my head away or lose two shillings. There was the same magnetism in this woman's eyes, and before I crossed the street, I felt myself impelled to turn and look at her again.

She came forward instantly as I did so, yet not so rapidly that I could not perceive the struggle of some powerful motive with her natural reluctance. I stepped back to the sidewalk.

"Oh, sir!" said she, "perhaps you could help a poor woman."

I was suspicious of my own sympathy, and answered coldly, "I don't know. What is the matter with you?"

"It's the rent," she said. "I can always airn my own livin' and *have* done it, and the rent too, all to

this last quarter, when I've been so ailin', and my boy gits no wages at all. If I don't pay it, I'll be turned into the street to-morrow. I'm no beggar: I niver thought to ha' beseeched anybody while my own two hands held out: but there it is, and here I am, and if it wasn't for my boy I wouldn't care how soon the world 'd come to an end for me. The best things was pawned to pay the doctor, only my weddin'-ring I can't let go, for Hugh's sake. His blessed soul wouldn't be satisfied, if I was buried without *that* on my finger."

She was crying long before she finished speaking, turning the thin hoop of very pale gold with her other thumb and finger, and then clasping her hands hard together, as if with an instinctive fear that somebody might snatch it off. This action and her tears melted me entirely to pity.

"How much must you have?" I asked.

"It's a whole quarter's rent—fifteen dollars. If that was paid, though I'm a little wake yet, I could wurrk for the two of us. Could you help me to it any way?"

"Where do you live?"

"It's jist by here—in Gooseberry Alley. And the Feenys will tell you it's ivery word true I've said. Andy, or his wife aither, was willin' enough to help me, but she has a baby not a week old, and they 've need of ivery penny."

She turned, with a quick, eager movement, and I followed, without any further question. Gooseberry Alley was but a few blocks distant. It was a close, dirty place, debouching on Sullivan Street, and barely wide enough for a single cart to be backed into. The houses were of brick, but had evidently been built all at once, and in such a cheap way that they seemed to be already tumbling down from a lack of cohesive material. A multitude of young children were playing with potato-parings or stirring up the foul gutter in the centre of the alley with rotting cabbage-stalks. I remember thinking that Nature takes great pains to multiply the low types of our race, while she heedlessly lets the highest run out. A very disagreeable smell, which I cannot describe, but which may be found wherever the poor Irish

congregate, filled the air. That alone was misery enough, to my thinking.

About half-way up the alley, the woman entered a house on the right-hand, saying, "It's a poor place, sir, for the likes of you to come into, but you must see whether I spake the truth."

In the narrow passage the floor was so dirty and the walls so smutched and greasy that I shuddered and held the skirts of my coat close to my sides; but when we had mounted a steep flight of steps and entered the woman's own apartment,—a rear projection of the house,—there was a change for the better. The first room was a bed-room, bare and with the least possible furniture, but comfortably clean. Beyond this there was a smaller room, which seemed to be a combined kitchen and laundry, to judge from the few necessary implements. The woman dusted an unpainted wooden stool with her apron and gave it to me for a seat.

"My boy made it," said she; "the master let him do that much, but it's little time he gits for such things."

She then entered into an explanation of her circumstances, from which I learned that her name was Mary Maloney ; that she was a native of the North of Ireland, and had emigrated to America with her husband ten years before. They had had many ups and downs, even while the latter lived. I suspected, though she did not say it, that he was a reckless, improvident fellow, whose new independence had completed his ruin. After his death, she had supported herself mostly by washing, but succeeded in getting her boy, Hugh, admitted as an apprentice into a large upholstery establishment, and might have laid up a little in the Savings Bank, if she had not been obliged to feed and lodge him for the first two years, only one of which was passed. Hugh was a good boy, she said, the picture of his father, and she thought he would be all the better for having a steady trade. After a while he would get wages, and be able to keep not only himself but her, too. Would I go into Feeny's—the front rooms on the same floor—and ask them to testify to her carackter?

I did not need any corroborative evidence of her

story. The woman's honesty was apparent to me, in her simple, consistent words, in her homely, worn features and unshrinking eyes, and in the utter yet decent poverty of her dwelling. I determined to help her,—but there were scarcely five dollars in my pocket and fifteen were to be paid on the morrow. It was drawing near to Mrs. De Peyster's dinner-hour, and I recollected that on two or three occasions small collections for charitable purposes had been taken up at that lady's table. I therefore determined to state the case, and ask the assistance of the other boarders.

"I must go now," I said, "but will try to do something for you. Will you be here at seven o'clock this evening?"

"I niver go out o' th' evenin'," she answered, "and not often o' th' day. Hugh 'll be home at seven. If you could only lend me the money, sir,—I don't ask you to give it, —I'd do some washin' for y'rself or y'r family, a little ivery wake, to pay ye back ag'in."

When we had reached a proper stage of the dinner,

I mentioned the matter to Messrs. Renwick and Blossom, asking them whether they and the other gentlemen would be willing to contribute towards the sum required.

"You are satisfied that it is a case of real distress, and the money is actually needed?" asked the latter.

"I am quite sure of it."

"Then here are two dollars, to begin with. I think we can raise the whole amount." He took advantage of a lull in the conversation and repeated my statement to the company. After a few questions which I was able to answer, pocket-books were produced and note after note passed down the table to me. Upon counting them, I found the sum contributed to be nineteen dollars. I stated this fact, adding it was more than was required. Some one answered, "So much the better,—the woman will have four dollars to begin the next quarter with." The others acquiesced, and then resumed their former topics of conversation, satisfied that the matter was now settled. I was greatly delighted with this generous response to my appeal,

and began to wonder whether the shallow, superficial interests with which my fellow boarders seemed to be occupied, were not, after all, a mere matter of education. They had given, in a careless, indifferent way, it was true; but then, they had given and not withheld. I had no right to suppose that their sympathy for the poor widow was not as genuine as my own. I have learned, since then, that this noble trait of generosity belongs to the city of my adoption. With all their faults, its people are unstinted givers; and no appeal, supported by responsible authority, is ever made to them in vain.

When I returned to Gooseberry Alley in the evening, I found Mary Maloney waiting for me at the door, her face wild and pale in the dim street-light. When she saw me I suppose she read the coming relief in my face, for she began to tremble, retreating into the dirty, dark passage as she whispered, "Come up-stairs, will you, plase — my boy's at home!"

An ironing-board was laid across two boxes in the kitchen, and Hugh, a short, stout lad of seventeen,

was ironing a shirt upon it. His broad face, curly red hair, and thick neck were thoroughly Irish, but his features had already the Bowery expression,—swaggering, impudent, and good-humoured. His bare arms, shining milk-white in the light of the single tallow-candle, showed the firmness and fulness of the growing muscle. The picture of his father—his mother had said. I did not doubt it; I saw already the signs of inherited appetites which only the strictest discipline could subdue. He stopped in his work, as we entered, looked at me, then at his mother, and something of her anxiety was reflected on his face. I even fancied that his colour changed as he waited for one of us to speak.

In the interest with which I regarded him, I had almost forgotten my errand. There was a sudden burning smell, and an exclamation from Mrs. Maloney,—

“Hugh, my boy—look what y’re a-doin’! The shirt,—whativer shall I do if y’ve burnt a hole in it?”

Hugh’s hand, holding the iron, had rested, in his

suspense, fortunately not upon the shirt, but the blanket under it, making a yellow, elliptical scorch. He flung down the iron before the little grate, and said, almost fiercely:—

“Why couldn’t you tell me at once, mother?”

“I have the money, Mrs. Maloney,” I answered for her,—“the fifteen dollars and a little more.”

“I knowed you’d bring it!” she exclaimed; “what didn’t I tell you, Hugh? I was afeared to be too shure, but somethin’ told me I’d be helped. Bless God we’ll see good times yit, though they’ve been so long a-comin’!”

The tears were running down her face, as she tried to say some words of thanks. Hugh’s eyes were moist, too; he darted a single grateful glance at me, but said nothing, and presently, seating himself on the wooden stool, began to whistle “Garryowen.” I delivered into Mrs. Maloney’s hands the fifteen dollars, and (having added three, as my own contribution) for any additional necessities. I explained to her how the sum had been raised as a free and willing gift, not a loan to be repaid by painful

savings from her scanty earnings. Then, beginning to look upon myself as a benefactor, I added some words of counsel which I might well have spared. With a more sensitive subject, I fancy they would have annulled any feeling of obligation towards me ; but Mary Maloney was too sincerely grateful not to receive them humbly and respectfully. She begged to be allowed to take charge of my washing, which I agreed to give her on condition that I should pay the usual rates. Her intention, however, as I afterwards discovered, included the careful reparation of frayed linen, the replacement of buttons, and the darning of stockings ; and in this way my virtue was its own reward.

I turned towards Hugh, in whom, also, I began to feel a protecting interest. After a little hesitancy, which mostly originated in his pride, he talked freely and quite intelligently about his trade. It was a large establishment, and they did work for a great many rich families. After another year, he would get five dollars a week, taking one season with another. He liked the place, although they gave

him the roughest and heaviest jobs, he being stronger in the arms than any of the other boys. He could read and write a little, he said,—would like to have a chance to learn more, but there was ironing to do every night. He had to help his mother to keep her customers; it wasn't a man's work, but he didn't mind that, at all,—it went a little ways towards paying for his keep.

Something in the isolated life and mutual dependence of this poor widow and son reminded me of my own boyish days. For the first time in many months I spoke of my mother, feeling sure that the humble understandings I addressed would yet appreciate all that I could relate. My heart was relieved and softened as I spoke of mother's self-denial, of her secret sufferings and her tragic death; and Mary Maloney, though she only said, "Dear, dear!" took, I was sure, every word into her heart. Hugh listened attentively, and the impudent, precocious expression of manhood vanished entirely from his face. When I had finished, and rose to leave, his mother said,—

"I must ha' felt that you was the son of a widow, this afternoon, when I set eyes on ye. Her blessed soul is satisfied with ye this night, and ye don't need my blessin', but you have it all the same. Hugh won't forgit ye, neither, will ye, Hugh?"

"I reckon not," Hugh answered, rather doggedly.

I had a better evidence of the fact, however, when Christmas came. He found his way to my room before I was dressed, and, with an air half sheepish, half defiant, laid a package on the table, saying,—

"Mother says she sends you a Merry Christmas, and many of 'em. I've brought an upholstery along for you. I made it myself."

I shook hands and thanked him, whereupon he said, "All right!" and retired. On opening the package, I found the "upholstery" to be a gigantic hemispherical pincushion of scarlet brocade, set in a gilt octagonal frame of equal massiveness. A number of new pins, rather crookedly forming the letters "J. G.," were already inserted in it. It was almost

large enough for a footstool, and reminded me of Hugh's red head every time I looked at it, but I devoutly gave it the place of honour on my toilet-table.

It was the only Christmas gift I received that year.

CHAPTER XII.

A DINNER-PARTY AT DELMONICO'S.

I SAW very little of Penrose for some weeks after our first meeting. He was much occupied with his arrangements for entering the mercantile firm with the beginning of the coming year; and these arrangements obliged him to revisit Philadelphia in the mean time. Matilda—or, rather, Mrs. Edmund Shanks—invited me to dine with them at the St. Nicholas, but pitched upon a day when my duties positively prevented my acceptance of the invitation. This was no cause of regret, for I was not drawn towards my cousin, and could not forgive the two fingers of her husband. For Penrose I retained much of the old attachment; but his nature was so different from mine that the innermost chamber of my heart re-

mained closed at his approach. I doubted whether it ever would open.

One evening in December he called upon me in Bleeker Street. However I might reason against his haughtiness, his proud, disdainful air when he was absent, one smile from those superb lips, one gentler glance from those flashing eyes, disarmed me. There was a delicate flattery, which I could not withstand, in the fact that this demigod (in a physical sense), with his air of conscious power, became human for me,—for me, alone, of all his acquaintances whom I knew, laid aside his mask. Nothing made me respect myself so much as the knowledge that he respected me.

“You have a very passable den, John,” he remarked, darting a quick, keen glance around my room; “rather a contrast to our bed in Dr. Dymond’s garret. How singularly things turn out, to be sure! Which of us would have suspected this that night when the Doctor made me share sheets with you? Yet, I had a notion then that you would be mixed up somehow with my life.”

"You were very careful not to give me any hint of it," I answered, laughing.

"I was right. Even if you are sure that an impression is a prophetic instinct, not a mere whim, it is best to wait until it proves itself. Then you are safe, in either case. There is no such element of weakness as superfluous frankness. I don't mean that it would have done any harm, in our case, but when I deliberately give myself a rule I like to stick to it. Only one man in a hundred will suspect that you have an emotion when you don't express it. You are thus, without any trouble, master of the ninety-nine, and can meet the hundredth with your whole strength."

"Are you frank now?" I asked.

"John," said he, gravely, "don't, I beg of you, play at words with me. I will confess to you that I should become morally *blâsé* if I could not, once in a year or so, be utterly candid with somebody. I'm glad you give me the chance, and if I recommend my rule to you, don't turn it against me. You are not the innocent boy I knew in Honeybrook,—I can

see that, plainly,—but you are an innocent man, compared with myself. I hope there will always be this difference between us.”

“I can’t promise that, Alexander,” I said; “but I will promise that there shall be no other difference.”


He took my hand, gave it a squeeze, and then, resuming his usual careless tone, said, “By-the-by, I must not forget one part of my errand. Shanks is to give a little dinner at Delmonico’s next Saturday,—ten or a dozen persons in all,—and he wants you to be one of the party. Now, don’t look so blank; *I* want you to come. Matilda has been reading your book, and she has persuaded Shanks (who knows no more about poetry than he does about horses, though he buys both) that you are a great genius. You can bother him, and bring him to your feet in ten sentences, if you choose. The dinner will be something superb,—between ourselves, ten dollars *par couvert*, without the wine,—and I have private orders from Matilda not to accept your refusal, on any pretext.”

I frankly told Penrose that I did not like Shanks, but would accept the invitation, if he insisted upon

it, rather than appear ungracious. I stipulated, however, that we should have neighbouring seats, if possible.

When the time arrived, I took an omnibus down Broadway, in no very festive humour. I anticipated a somewhat more solemn and stiff repetition of Mrs. De Peyster's board and its flat, flippant conversation. The servant conducted me to a private parlour on the second floor, where I found the host and most of the guests assembled. Matilda welcomed me very cordially as "Cousin Godfrey," and Shanks this time gave me his whole hand with an air of deference which I did not believe to be real. Knowing Matilda's critical exactness, I had taken special pains to comply with the utmost requirements of custom, in the matter of dress and manners; and if my demeanour was a little more stiff than usual, I am sure that was no disparagement in the eyes of the others. My apprenticeship at Mrs. De Peyster's table had done me good service: I could see by Penrose's eyes that I acquitted myself creditably.

The remaining guests arrived about the same




time. We were presented to each other with becoming formality, and I made a mechanical effort to retain the names I heard, for that evening, at least. They were only important to me for the occasion, for I neither expected nor cared to see any of them again. I noticed that there were three ladies besides Matilda, but merely glanced at them indifferently until the name "Miss Haworth" arrested my attention. Then I recollected the violet eyes, the low white brow, and the rippling light-brown hair. Seeing a quick recognition in her face, I bowed and said, "I have already had the pleasure, I believe."

At these words, a gentleman standing near her, to whom I had not yet been introduced, turned and looked at me rather sharply. She must have noticed the movement, for she said to me, with (I thought) a slight embarrassment in her tone, "My brother, Mr. Floyd."

Mr. Floyd bowed stiffly, without offering me his hand. I was amazed to find that he could be the brother of Miss Haworth,—so different, not only in name but in feature. I looked at them both as I

exchanged the usual commonplaces of an incipient acquaintance, and was more and more convinced that there could be no relationship between them. His face struck me as mean, cunning, and sensual; hers frank, pure, and noble. It was a different type of face from that of any woman I remembered, yet the strong impression of having once seen it before returned to my mind. I was surprised at myself for having paid so little attention to her when we first met in Mr. Clarendon's house.

Though her voice had that calm, even sweetness which I have always considered to be the most attractive quality in woman, it was not in the least like Amanda Bratton's. Hers would have sounded thin and hard after its full, melting, tremulous music. It belonged as naturally to the beauty of her lips as tint and pearly enamel to a sea-shell. Her quiet, unobtrusive air was allied to self-possession almost beyond her years,—for she could not have been more than twenty. Though richly and fashionably dressed, she had chosen soft, neutral colours, without a glitter or sparkle, except from the sapphires



in her ears and at her throat. I was not yet competent to feel a very enthusiastic admiration ; but I was conscious that the sight of her filled me with a pleasant sense of comfort and repose.

"Isabel," said Mrs. Shanks, tapping Miss Haworth's shoulder with a fan, "*on a servi*. Will you take Mr. Godfrey's arm?"


I bowed and crooked my elbow, and we followed the other ladies into the adjoining room. The touch of the gloved hand affected me singularly ; I know not what soft, happy warmth diffused itself through my frame from that slight point of contact. The magnetism of physical nearness never before affected me so delicately yet so powerfully.

Matilda seated the guests according to her own will, and with her usual tact. Her brother's future partners were her own supporters, while Shanks was flanked by their wives. Miss Haworth was assigned to the central seat on one side of the oval table, between Penrose and myself, with Mr. Floyd and two other young fashionables facing us. The table was resplendent with cut-glass and silver, and fra-

grant with gorgeous piles of tropical flowers and fruit, the room dazzling with the white lustre of gas, and the accomplished French servants glided to and fro with stealthy elegance. The devil of Luxury within me chuckled and clapped his hands with delight. If Life would furnish me with more such dinners, I thought, I might find it tolerably sunny.

The dinner was a masterpiece of art. Both the natural harmonies and the conventional stipulations were respected. We had oysters and Chablis, turtle-soup succeeded by glasses of iced punch, fish and sherry, and Rüdesheimer, Clicquot, Burgundy, Lafitte, and *liqueurs* in their proper succession, accompanying the wondrous alternation of courses. Hitherto, I had been rather omnivorous in my tastes,—only preferring good things to bad,—but now I perceived that even the material profession of cooking had its artistic ideal.

The conversation, as was meet, ran mostly upon the dishes which were placed before us. Mr. Shanks developed an immense amount of knowledge in this direction, affirming that he had given special direc-



tions for a single clove of garlic to be laid for five minutes on a plate with certain *cotelettes en papillotes*, under a glass cover; that the canvas-back ducks should be merely *carried through* a hot kitchen, which was cooking enough for them; and that the *riz de veau* would have been ruined if he had not procured, with great difficulty, a particular kind of pea which only grew in the neighbourhood of Arras. "The Lafitte," he said, "was the '34,—from the lower part of the hill; Delmonico won't acknowledge that he has it, unless you happen to know, and even then it's a great favour to get a few bottles."

"Many persons can't tell the '34 from the '46," said one of the partners, setting the rim of his glass under his nostrils and sniffing repeatedly; "but you notice the difference in the *bouquet*."

It really seemed to me that this voluptuous discussion of the viands as they appeared,—this preliminary tasting, this lingering enjoyment of the rare and peculiar qualities, this prelude aroma of the vine, tempering yet fixing its flavour,—constituted an æsthetic accompaniment which balanced the phy-

sical task of the meal and called upon the brain to assist the stomach. I drank but sparingly of the wines, however, being warned by the growing flush on the faces of the three young gentlemen opposite, and restrained by the sweet, sober freshness of Miss Haworth's cheek, at my side.

As the conversation grew riotous in tone, and laughter and repartee (mostly of a stupid character, but answering the purpose as well as the genuine article) ruled the table, my gentle neighbour seemed to encourage my attempts to withdraw from the noisy circle of talk and establish a quiet *tête-à-tête* between our two selves. Penrose was occupied with one of his partners and Matilda with the other; Mr. Floyd was relating the last piece of scandal, with the corrections and additions of his neighbours, and each and all so absorbed in their several subjects that we were left in comparative privacy.

"Have you long known my cousin, Mrs. Shanks?" I asked.

"Only familiarly since last summer, when we were at Long Branch together. We had met before, in

society, once or twice, but one never makes acquaintances in that way."

"Do you think we can ever say that we are truly acquainted with any one?" said I.

"Why not?" she asked, after a look in which I read a little surprise at the question.

I felt that my words had been thrown to the surface from a hidden movement of dislike to the society present, which lurked at the bottom of my mind. They shot away so suddenly and widely from my first question that some explanation was necessary; yet I could not give the true one. She waited for my answer, and I was compelled to a partial candour.

"I believe," I said, "that the word 'acquainted' put the question into my head. I have been obliged to reverse my first impressions so often that it seems better not to trust them. And I have really wondered whether men can truly know each other."

"Perhaps nearly as well as they can know themselves," said she. "When I see some little vanity, which is plain to every one except its possessor, I

fancy that the same thing may very easily be true of myself."

"You, Miss Haworth!" I exclaimed.

"I as well as another. You do not suppose that I consider myself to be without faults?"

"No, of course not," I answered, so plumply and earnestly that she smiled, looking very much amused. But the fact is, I had made a personal application of her first remark, and answered for myself rather than for her. Perceiving this, I could not help smiling in turn.

"I confess," I said, "that I have mine, but I try to conceal them from others."

"And you would be very angry if they were detected?"

"Yes, I think I would."

"Yet all your friends may know them, nevertheless," said she, "and keep silent towards you as you towards them. Do you think universal candour would be any better? For my part, I fancy it would soon set us all together by the ears."

"Just what I told you, John," said Penrose,

striking in from the other side. "Candour is weakness."

"I begin to think so, too," I remarked gloomily. "Deceit seems to be the rule of the world; I find it wherever I turn. If the outside of the sepulchre shows the conventional whitewash, it makes no difference how many skeletons are inside."

I took up a little glass toy which stood before me, filled, apparently, with green oil. It slid down my throat like a fiery, perfumed snake.

"Penrose!" cried Mr. Floyd, "is that the Charreuse before you?"

"No," said the former, turning the bottle, "it's Curaçoa."

"Ah, that reminds me,"—cried Mr. Shanks, commencing a fresh story, which I did not care to hear. The old feeling of sadness and depression began to steal over me, and the loud gaiety of the table became more hollow and distasteful than ever.

"Mr. Godfrey," said Miss Haworth, a little timidly.

I looked up. Her clear violet eyes were fixed

upon me with a disturbed expression, and there may have been, for a second, a warmer tinge on her cheek, as she addressed me,—

“I am afraid you misunderstood me. I think a candid nature is the highest and best. I only meant that there is no use in constantly reminding our friends, or they us, of little human weaknesses. We may be candid, certainly, without ceasing to be charitable.”

“Yes, we *may* be,” I said, “but who *is*? Where is there a nature which may be relied upon, first and for ever? I once thought the world was full of such, but I am cured of my folly.”

The trouble in her eyes deepened. “I am sorry to hear you say so,” she said, in a low voice, and began mechanically pulling to pieces a bunch of grapes.

My bitter mood died in an instant. I felt that my words were not only false in themselves, but false as the utterance of my belief. There were, there must be, truth and honour in men and women; I was true, and was there no other virtue in the

world than mine? I could have bitten my tongue for vexation. To retract my expressions on the spot,—and I now perceived how positively they had been made,—would prove me to be a whimsical fool, and Miss Haworth must continue to believe me the negatist I seemed. In vain I tried to console myself with the thought that it made no difference. A deeper instinct told me that it *did*,—that the opinion of a pure-hearted girl was not a thing to be lightly esteemed. I had flattered myself on the social tact I had acquired; but my first serious conversation told me what a bungler I still was, in allowing the egotism of a private disappointment to betray itself and misrepresent my nature to another.

While these thoughts flashed through my mind, Penrose had commenced a conversation with Miss Haworth. Glancing around the table, I encountered Matilda's dark eyes. "Cousin Godfrey!" she called to me, "how do you vote?—shall we stay or go? Edmund always sits with his head in a cloud, at home, and very often Aleck with him; so I think if we open the door and let down the windows, the

atmosphere will be endurable,—only you gentlemen generally prefer to banish us. I don't believe it's any good that you say or do when you get rid of us."

"Stay," said I. "There will be no cloud from my lips. Why should you not keep your seats, and let the gentlemen withdraw, if there must be a division?"

"Gallantly spoken, cousin. But I see that Edmund has the consent of his neighbours, and is puffing to make up for lost time. I congratulate you on your wives, gentlemen: I thought I was the only veteran present. Isabel! they are not driving you away, I hope?"

"Oh, no!" said Miss Haworth, who had risen from her seat: "but father is home from the Club by this time, and he always likes to have a little music before going to bed. Tracy, will you please see if the carriage is waiting?"

Mr. Floyd put his head out of the window and called, "James!" "Here, sir!" came up from the street, and Miss Haworth, giving a hand to Matilda and her husband, and leaving a pleasant "Good-

night!" for the rest of us, collectively, glided from the room. Mr. Shanks escorted her to her carriage.

This little interruption was employed by the company as an opportunity to change their places at the table. A sign from Matilda called me to an empty chair beside her.

"I'm so glad you're a poet, Cousin Godfrey," she said,—“the first in our family; and I assure you we have need of the distinction to balance the *mésalliance*,—you know all about it from Aleck, though you're not near enough related to be hurt by it as we were. I think we shall come to New York to live: Edmund prefers it, and one gets tired of Philadelphia in the long run. We have plenty of style there, to be sure; but our set is very much the same from year to year. Here, it may be a little too free, too—*qu'est ce que c'est?* easy of entrance,—but there's a deal more life and variety. Don't you think so? but, of course, you gentlemen are never so particular. Society would fall into ruin, if it wasn't for *us*.”

“It's very well you save society, for you ruin individuals,” I remarked.

"Hear that, Aleck!" she exclaimed; "I didn't think it was in him. You have certainly been giving him lessons in your own infidelity. He will spoil you, Cousin Godfrey."

Penrose looked at me and laughed. "I'm glad you are a match for 'Till, John," he said. "If I've taught you, the pupil surpasses the teacher."

Much more of this badinage followed. My apprenticeship to words and phrases gave me an advantage in the use of it, and I was reckless enough to care little what I said, so that my words had some point and brilliancy. Penrose was more than a match for me, but he considerably held back and allowed me to triumph over the others. It was as he predicted: I brought Mr. Edmund Shanks to my feet in ten sentences. He called me "Cousin Godfrey," and said repeatedly, in a somewhat thick voice, "If you only smoked, you would be a trump."

"He'll come to that after a while; he can't have all the virtues at once," remarked Mr. Floyd. I liked neither the tone nor the look of the man: a sneer seemed to lurk under his light, laughing air.

He was one of the two or three who had lighted their cigars, and substituted brandy and ice for the soft, fragrant wines of Bordeaux. A sharp retort rose to my tongue; but I held it back from an instinct which told me that he would welcome an antagonism *I* had authorized.

It was near midnight when the guests separated, and as we descended in a body to the street, we found the three coachmen asleep on their boxes.

"Are you not going to get in, Aleck?" said Matilda, as Penrose slammed the door.

"No; I am going to walk with Godfrey. Good-night!"

Mr. Floyd joined us, smoking his cigar, humming opera-tunes and commenting freely upon the company, as we walked up Broadway. When we reached the corner of Howard Street, he muttered something about an engagement, and turned off to the left.

Penrose laughed as he gave utterance to certain surmises, in what seemed to me a very cold-blooded manner. He took my arm as he added: "I don't know that Floyd is any worse than most of the

young New Yorkers ; but he's rather a bore to me, and I'm glad to get rid of him. I see so much of the class that I grow tired of it,—yet I suppose I belong to it myself.”

“Not in character, Alexander !” I protested : “you have talent, and pride, and principle !”

“None too much of either, unless it be pride,” he said. “Take care you don't overrate me. I can be intensely selfish, and you may discover the fact, some day. Whatever I demand with all the force of my nature I must have, and will trample down anything and anybody that comes between. You have only seen the mother's blood in me, John. There is a good deal of my father's, and it is bad.”

I saw the dark knitting of his brows in the lamp-light, and strove to turn aside the gloomy introversion of his mood. “How is it,” I asked, “that this Floyd is a brother of Miss Haworth ?”

“Stepbrother, by marriage,” he answered. “He is in reality no relation. Old Floyd was a widower with one son when he married the widow Haworth,—some ten years ago, I believe : Matilda knows all

about it,—and the boy and girl called themselves brother and sister. The old man has a stylish house on Gramercy Park; but he's an inveterate stock-jobber, and has failed twice in the last five years. I suspect she keeps up the establishment."

"How?"

"She's an heiress. Two-thirds of her father's property were settled on her,—some hundreds of thousands, I've been told. No wonder Floyd would like to marry her."

"He? Is it possible?" I exclaimed.

"That's the gossip; and it *is* possible. He is no relation, as I have said; but I fancy she has a mind of her own. She seems to be a nice, sensible girl. What do you think? You saw much more of her than I did."

"Sensible,—yes," said I, slowly, for I had in fact not decided what I thought of her,—“so far as I could judge; and almost beautiful. But her face puzzles me: I seem to have seen it already, yet——”

Penrose interrupted me. “I know what you mean. I saw it, also, and was bothered for two

minutes. The engraving of St. Agnes, from somebody's picture, in Goupil's window. It is very like her. Here is the St. Nicholas; won't you come in? Then good-night, old fellow, and a clear head to you in the morning!"

Yes; that was it! I remembered the picture, and as I walked homeward alone, along the echoing pavement, I murmured to myself,—


"The shadows of the convent-towers
Slant down the snowy sward,
Still creeping with the creeping hours
That lead me to my Lord."

I don't know what strange, poetic whim possessed me, that I should have made the purchase of the engraving my first business on Monday morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONTAINING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, MY VISIT TO
THE ICHNEUMON.

AFTER the first of January, Penrose became a member of the firm of Dunn, Deering, & Co., whose tall iron warehouse on Chambers Street is known to everybody. Having very properly determined to master the details of the business at the start, he was so constantly occupied, that I saw little of him for two or three months thereafter. Mr. and Mrs. Shanks lingered still a few weeks before returning to Philadelphia; but their time was mostly devoted to up-town balls, which I had no wish to attend, although Matilda offered herself as godmother of my social baptism. My days and the greater part of my



nights were appropriated, and by no means unpleasantly, to my business duties. Little by little, I found my style increasing in point and fluency, and the subjects assigned to my pen began to present themselves in a compact, coherent form. I was proud enough not to accept an increase of salary without endeavouring to render adequate service, and thus the exertions I made rewarded themselves.

In my case, Schiller's "Occupation which never wearies—which slowly creates, and destroys nothing," was a helping and protecting principle,—how helpful, indeed, I was yet to learn. I had been wounded too deeply to wear a painless scar; the old smart came back, from time to time, to torment me,—but my life was much more cheerful than I could have anticipated. My affections still lacked an object, constantly putting forth tendrilled shoots to wither in the air, but my intellectual ambition began to revive, though in a soberer form. I had still force enough to control the luxurious cravings of my physical nature,—the thirst for all the enjoyments of sense, which increased with my maturing blood. When I

coveted wealth, I was aware that it was not alone for the sake of leisure for study and opportunities of culture ; it was for the wine as well as the bread of life. I saw that velvet made a pleasanter seat than wood ; that pheasants tasted better than pork ; that a box at the opera was preferable to leaning out of a garret-window and listening to *Casta diva* played on a hand-organ,—in short, that indulgence of every kind was more agreeable than abstinence.

I know that many good people will draw down their brows, and shake their heads when they read this confession. But I beg them to remember that I am not preaching, nor even moralizing ; I am simply stating the facts of my life. Nay, the fact, I am sure, of most lives ; for, although I do not claim to be better, I steadfastly protest against being considered worse, than the average of men. Therefore, you good people, whose lips overflow with professions of duty towards your fellow-beings, and the beauty of self-denial, and the sin of indulgence, look, I pray you, into your own hearts, whether there be no root of the old weed remaining,—whether some natural

appetite do not, now and then, still send up a green shoot which it costs you some trouble to cut off,—before weighing my youth in your balance. It is no part of my plan to make of myself an immaculate hero of romance. I fear, alas! that I am not a hero in any sense. I have touched neither the deeps nor the heights: I have only looked down into the one and up towards the other; in lesser vibrations on either side of that noteless middle line which most men travel from birth to death.

My affection for Swansford kept alive in my heart a faint but vital faith in the existence of genuine emotions. I saw him once a week, for we had agreed to spend our Sunday afternoons together, alternately, in each other's rooms. He still disposed of an occasional song, as I of a story, but his great work was not completed,—had not been touched for months, he informed me. He was subject to fits of profound dejection, which, I suspected, proceeded from a physical cause. He was decidedly paler and thinner than when I first made his acquaintance. The drudgery of his lessons frequently rendered him

impatient and irritable, and he was anxious to procure a situation as organist, which would yield enough to support him in his humble way. I wanted to bring him together with Penrose, in the hope that the latter might be able to assist him ; but feared to propose a meeting to two such diverse characters, and, up to this time, accident had not favoured my plan.

The Friday-evening receptions of Mrs. Yorkton—I beg pardon, Adeliza Choate—continued to be given, but I did not often attend them. I had been fortunate enough to obtain entrance to the literary *soirées* of another lady, whom I will not name, but whose tact, true refinement of character, and admirable culture drew around her all that was best in letters and in the arts. In her *salons* I saw the possessors of honoured and illustrious names ; I heard books and pictures discussed with the calm discrimination of intelligent criticism ; the petty vanities and jealousies I had hitherto encountered might still exist, but they had no voice ; and I soon perceived the difference between those who aspire, and those

who achieve. Art, I saw, has its own peculiar microcosm,—its born nobles, its plodding, conscientious, respectable middle-class, and its clamorous, fighting rabble. To whatever class I might belong, I could not shut my eyes to the existing degrees; and much of my respect for the coarse assertion of Smithers, the petulant conceit of Danforth, and the extravagant inspiration of the once-adored Adeliza evaporated in the contrast.

To Brandagee all these circles seemed to be open; yet I could not help noticing that he preferred those where his superior experience made him at once an authority and a fear. The rollicking devil in him was impatient of restraint, and he had too much tact to let it loose at inopportune times and places. I sometimes met him in those delightful rooms which no author or artist who lived in New York at that time can have forgotten, and was not surprised to see that, even in his subdued character, he still inspired a covetable interest. He now came to the 'Wonder' office but seldom. He could never be relied upon to have his articles ready at the appointed time; and

there had been some quarrel between him and Mr. Clarendon, in consequence of which he transferred his services to the 'Avenger.' I had become such a zealous disciple of the former paper that I looked upon this transfer as almost involving a sacrifice of principle. Mr. Clarendon, however, seemed to care little about it, for he did not scruple still to send to Brandagee for an article on some special subject.

He had at one time a scheme for publishing a small fashionable daily, to be devoted to the opera and the drama, artistic and literary criticism, the turf, dress, and other kindred subjects; the type and paper to be of the utmost elegance, and the contents to rival in epigrammatic brilliancy, boldness, and impertinence the best productions of Parisian *feuilletonistes*. Had the wealth of many of the New York families been any index of their culture, the scheme might have succeeded, but it was too hazardous to entrust any publisher of sufficient means. He then determined to repeat the attempt in a less ambitious form,—a weekly paper instead of a daily,—which would involve little preliminary expense, and

might be easily dropped if it failed to meet expectations. It was to be called 'The City Oracle,' and to bear the familiar quotation from Shakspeare as its device. I had heard Brandagee discuss the plan with Mr. Withering (who decidedly objected to it, very much preferring a Quarterly Review), and had promised, incidentally, to contribute a sketch for the first number, if it should ever make its appearance.

Towards the close of winter,—I think it was in February,—I met Brandagee one evening, as he was issuing from the Smithsonian, cigar in mouth, as usual.

"Ha!" he exclaimed; "I was this moment thinking of you. You have nothing to do at this hour,—come round with me to the Ichneumon. We are going to talk over 'The Oracle.' Babcock has as good as promised to undertake the publication."

"Indeed?" said I. "When will you begin?"

"The first number ought to appear within ten or twelve days. That will leave me three weeks of the opera season,—long enough to make a sensation, and have the paper talked about. Notoriety is the

life of a new undertaking of this kind. I can count on six pens already, including yours and my own. In fact, I could do the whole work alone on a pinch; though I don't profess to be equal to Souville. You never heard of Thersite Souville, I dare say: he wrote the whole of 'Gargantua,'—just such a paper as I intend to make my 'Oracle,'—editorials, criticisms, gossip, and *feuilleton*; and everybody supposed that the best intellect in Paris was employed upon it, regardless of expense. He was up to any style; but he always changed his beverage with his pen. For the manner of Sue, he drank hot punch; for Dumas, cider *mousseux*; Gautier or De Musset, absinthe; Paul de Kock, Strasburg beer,—and so on. It was a great speculation for his publisher, who cleared a hundred and fifty thousand francs a year, one third of which was Souville's share. If he had not been so vain as to blab the secret, he might have kept it up to this day. Come on; you'll find all my coadjutors at the Ichneumon."

"Where is the Ichneumon," I asked, "and what is it?"

"Not know it! You *are* a green Bohemian. Close at hand, in Crosby Street. The name is my suggestion, and I'm rather proud of it. When the landlord—Miles, who used to be bar-tender at the 'Court of Appeals'—took his new place, he was puzzled to get a title, as all the classic epithets, Shades, Pewter Mugs, Banks, Houses of Commons, Nightingales, Badgers, and Dolphins, were appropriated by others. I offered to give him a stunning name, in consideration of occasional free drinks. I first hit on the *Ornithorhynchus paradoxus*, which was capital; but Miles was fool enough to think that nobody could ever pronounce or remember it. Then I gave him the Ichneumon, with which he was satisfied,—he, as well as all Crosby Street, calls it 'Ike Newman.' I've persuaded him to give us a back room, and keep a bed up-stairs for any fellow who is boozy or belated. We shall make a classic place of it, and if the 'Oracle' once fairly opens its mouth, the crocodiles must look out for their eggs!"

We reached the house, almost before he had done speaking. It was an old-fashioned brick dwelling,

the lower story of which had been altered to suit the requirements of the times. An octagonal lantern, on the front glass of which an animal "very like a weasel" was painted, hung over the door, and through the large adjoining window there was a spectral vision of a bar somewhere in the shadowy depths of the house.

The landlord was leaning over the counter, talking to a group of flashy gents, as we entered. He had the unmistakable succulent flesh and formless mouth of an Englishman, but with his hair closely cropped behind, and the back of his neck shaved in a straight line around from ear to ear, like a Bowery boy.

"Miles," said Brandagee, "another of us,—Mr. Godfrey."

"Y'r most obedient—'ope to see you often," said Miles, rising to an erect posture and giving me his hand.

"Anybody in the Cave, Miles?"

"There's three gents, Mr. Brandagee,—Smithers, for one, the painter chap, and the heavy gent."

"Come on, then, Godfrey," said Brandagee, laugh-

ing. "It's Ponder and Smears. I'll bet a thousand ducats Ponder wants to help us out; but, between you and me, his didactics would be a millstone around our necks. I'll manage him. This is the way to the Cave—of Trophonius, you understand."

He entered a narrow passage on the right of the bar, pushed open with his foot a door at the further end, and we found ourselves in a room of tolerable size, with a dense blue atmosphere which threatened to eclipse the two sickly gas-lights. Smithers had untied his scarlet cravat, and, with head thrown back over the top of his arm-chair, suffered his huge meerschaum pipe, lazily held between his teeth, to dangle against his hairy throat. Mr. S. Mears was drawing his portrait in a condition of classic nudity, on the margin of a newspaper, with the end of a burnt match. Mr. Ponder, on the other side of the table, was talking, and evidently in as heavy a style as he wrote. Both the latter were smoking. All three started up briskly in their seats at our entrance.

"Ouf!" puffed Brandagee, with an expiration of

delight. "Well done! This reminds me of the *salon des nuages*, as Frédéric Soulié called it, in the rear of the Cafe Doré. We used to hire two or three of the servants to smoke in it for an hour before our arrival. It was a special close communion of our own, and there was competition to get admitted, though few could stand the test. Cherubini had to leave in a quarter of an hour, and as for Delacroix, I never saw a sicker man. Let us improve this atmosphere before the others come. Here, Godfrey, is a *claro*; don't be afraid,—you must commence some day."

I lighted the cigar, and made a feint of smoking it. But I never could acquire any liking for the habit; and my associates, after finding that I always spoiled an entire cigar in the process of burning half an inch, finally ceased to waste any more upon me.

"Well, Godfrey," said Brandagee, turning to me, "since you are to be one of us, we'll take your initiation fee."


"What shall it be?" I asked.

"Oh, we won't be hard upon you. Beer through

the evening, with a modest bowl of punch as a stirrup-cup."

He rang the bell as he spoke, and we were all presently supplied with corpulent mugs. There were two other arrivals,—one a reporter of the 'Avenger,' the other a young gentleman who had a clerkship in the Custom-House and wrote for the magazines. I found myself more at home in this company than at Mrs. Yorkton's. Though there was rather a repellant absence of sentiment, there was, at least, nothing of the mock article. Nobody attempted to play a part, knowing the absurdity of wearing a mask behind the curtain, and suspecting how soon it would be torn off, if attempted. Thus the conversation, if occasionally coarse, if unnecessarily profane, if scoffing and depreciative of much that I knew to be good and noble, was always lively, racy, and entertaining. I surmised that my associates were not the best of men; but then, on the other hand, they were not bores.

The plan of the 'Oracle' was first discussed. Each one, I perceived, was quite willing to dictate the




best possible programme; but Brandagee steadily kept before them the fact that he was the originator of the idea, and would resent dictation, while he was willing to receive suggestions. Besides, Babcock, the publisher, had not yet fully committed himself, and it all might end in smoke. His own specialty of musical and dramatic criticism was an understood matter; Mears was to undertake the art notices ("he paints badly, and therefore is tolerably sure to write well," Brandagee whispered to me); the 'Avenger' reporter was selected to prepare the city gossip; while to the clerk and myself was allotted the writing of short, lively stories or sketches of character for the first page. There now only remained Smithers and Ponder to be disposed of. The former of these informed us that he was willing to contribute passages from his "Edda of the Present," an heroic, muscular poem, in irregular metre; and the latter thought an essay on "The Influence of Literature upon National Character" would be an indispensable feature of the new journal.

"Not in the first number," replied Brandagee;

"*that* must be all foam and sparkle. I don't contemplate many heavy articles at any time. It might do for Vienna. When my old friend Grillparzer founded his light 'Sonntagsblatt,'—something like the 'Oracle' in form,—he began with articles on Hegel's Philosophy, the Cretan-Doric dialect, the religion of the Ostiaks, and a biography of Paracelsus. Locality makes all the difference in the world. We are nearer the latitude of Paris than any other capital, and there, if anything new has a didactic smell, the public won't touch it."

"But the national feeling"—commenced Mr. Ponder.

"Very well for the rural districts; I don't find much of it here. We are cosmopolitan, which is better. If I were beginning in Boston I would give you eight columns—four for the Pilgrim Fathers, and four for a description of the Common, as viewed from Bunker Hill Monument; or if it were Philadelphia, you should write a solid article, setting forth the commercial decline of New York,—but here we care for nothing which does not bring a



sensation with it, We are not provincial, not national, not jealous of our neighbours; we live, enjoy, and pay roundly in order to be diverted. The 'Oracle' must be smart, pert, hinting what may not properly be said outright, never behind with the current scandal, and brilliantly, not stupidly, impudent. With these qualities it can't fail to be a success. It will be a tongue which hundreds of people would pay well to keep from wagging."

"The devil!" exclaimed Mears; "do you mean to make a black-mail concern of it?"

"Don't be so quick on the trigger, young man! I merely referred to the power which we should hold. A thing may be bid for, but you are not obliged to sell it. In the way of advertising, however, there would be great and certain profits; we might enter into competition with Napoleon B. Quigg, or Gou-raud's medicated epic. There are scores of retail dry-goods merchants who would give fifty dollars a piece to have their establishments mentioned in a novel or a play. I have a grand scheme for raising the wind, but I won't disclose it to you just now."

Our mugs were replenished, and Brandagee, who seemed to be in the mood for a harangue, went on again.

"There's plenty of money in the world," he said, "if it were only in the right hands. Of all forms of Superstition which exist, that concerning money is the most absurd. It is looked upon as something sacred,—something above intellect, humanity, or religion. Yet it is an empty form—a means of transfer, being nothing in itself—like the red flame, which is no substance, only representing the change of one substance into another. You never really possess it until you spend it. What is it to knowledge, to the results of experience, or the insight of genius? But you come to me for advice or information which cannot be bought in the market,—the value of which gold cannot represent; I give it and you go your way. Then I borrow a hundred dollars from your useless surplus; you oblige me to sign a note payable in so many days, and consider me dishonoured if I fail to meet it! Why should I not take of your matter as freely as you of my spirit? Why should this

meanest of substances be elevated to such mysterious reverence? They only who turn it to the enrichment of their lives—who use it as a gardener does manure, for the sake of the flowers—have the abstract right to possess it. Jenkins has a million, but never buys a book or a picture, doesn't know the taste of Burgundy, and can't tell 'Yankee Doodle' from '*Il mio tesoro*'—does that money belong to him? No, indeed,—it is mine, ours, everybody's who understands how to set it in motion and bring the joy and the beauty of life bubbling up to the surface!"

"Bravo!" cried the others, evidently more than half inclined to be of the same way of thinking. I did not suppose that Brandagee was entirely in earnest; but I was fascinated by the novelty of his views, and unable, at the time, to detect wherein they were unsound.

"Do you know, fellows," he continued, "that our lives are far more in accordance with the pervading spirit of Christianity than those of the men who devote themselves to earning and hoarding? We are expressly commanded to take no thought for the

morrow. There is nowhere in the Bible a commendation of economy, of practical talent, even of industry in a secular sense. It was so understood in the early ages of Christianity, and the devotees who adopted lazy contemplation as a profession never starved to death. Perhaps they lived better than the contemporary men of business. I don't mean that their ways would suit us; but then they lived out their own idea, and that's all we can do. Work, and the worry that comes with it, are relics of paganism. The stupid masses always were, and will be, pagans; and it was meant that they should labour in order to give leisure to what little intelligence there is in the world. If they are stiff-necked and rebellious, I hold that there is no particular harm in using our superior cunning to obtain what justly belongs to us. Suppose they make an outcry? Of course they look at the subject from their, which is the lower, the pagan point of view. Pagans, you are aware, have no rights which elected Christians are bound to respect."

Bandagee had trenched, before he was aware of

it, on the favourite hobby of Smithers. The latter began to puff furiously at his meerschaum, now and then snorting the smoke from his nostrils in long blue lines.

"It's a bit of adroit sophistry!" he exclaimed. "These pagans, as you call them, with their strong bones, their knotted muscles, their thick cerebellums, and their cast-iron stomachs, are the very men who understand how to use life. They could soon crush out your scanty breed of forced and over-refined Epicureans, if they cared to do it: you should be glad that they suffer you to exist. What you call work is only the sportive overplus of their colossal energy. If they did not keep alive the blood of the race, which you are trying all the while to exhaust, there would soon be, not only an end of Art and Literature, but an end of Man on this planet!"

"Smithers," said Brandagee, coolly, "if you would take a little more of the blood that circulates in your big body and send it in the direction of your brains, you would see that you have not come within a mile of meeting my assertion. I take *you* as my

living verification. You like work no better than the rest of us, and you mix with your stevedores and sailors and 'longshoremen only to exploit them in your 'Edda.' I have often seen you, sitting on a pier-head with your pipe in your mouth; but I don't believe that 'the sportive overplus of your colossal energy' ever incited you to handle a single bale or barrel. I don't object to your hobby: it's a good one to ride, so far as the public is concerned, but we, here in the Cave, understand each other, I take it."

Smithers began to grow red about the gills, and would have resented the insinuation, but for the opportune arrival of Miles, bearing a curiously-shaped vessel of some steaming liquid and fresh glasses. The interest which these objects excited absorbed the subject of debate. Mears threw himself into a statuesque attitude and exclaimed in a Delphic voice, "The offering is accepted;" while Brandagee chanted,—

"Fill the cup and fill the can,
Have a rouse before the morn!"

and all shoved their glasses together under the nose of the ladle.

"Here, Godfrey," said Brandagee, striking his glass against mine, "welcome and acceptance from the mystic brotherhood! Here you have your money, as I was explaining: it has taken form at last, instead of lying, as a dry idea, in the pocket. I hold that we have the right to seize on shadows wherever we find them, for the sake of converting them into substance. Hence, if a man thinks I am taking away his shadow, in the Peter Schlemihl sense, let him apply the law of *similia similibus*, and parting with another shadow shall give him peace of mind. This you, Smears, would call levying blackmail. But you artists always take the gross, material view of things,—it belongs to you. The senses of Colour and Form are not intellectual qualities. Never mind, I mean no disparagement. The value of mind is that it teaches us how to make the right use of matter; so we all come back to the same starting-point."

The conversation now became general and noisy,

and I will not undertake to report it further. In fact, I have but an indistinct recollection of what followed, except that some time after midnight we parted affectionately at the corner of Spring Street and Broadway. The next morning I arose heavy in head, but light in purse,—so much lighter that I suspect the punch-bowl was filled more than once in the course of the evening.

Various impediments prevented the 'Oracle' from appearing before the close of the opera season, and the plan was therefore suspended until the next fall. But the Cave of Trophonius still existed, under the guardianship of the Ichneumon; and I often seized an hour to enjoy forgetfulness of the present, in the lawless recklessness of the utterance to which it was dedicated.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH I TALK WITH TWO GIRLS AT A VERY
SOCIABLE PARTY.

I HAVE said that I still felt but little inclination to mingle in society, although I might easily have found opportunities. I fancy, however, that this reluctance was more imaginary than real: it belonged to the soberer *rôle* which I had chosen in the great drama. I could not quite justify my participation in the gaieties of the season to that spirit of stern indifference which I ought, logically, to have preserved. My nature, however, was not so profound as I supposed, and when once I was led to forget myself in the presence of others, I speedily developed a lively capacity for enjoyment. More than once I

went slowly and moodily to a scene, whence I returned with buoyant, dancing spirits. Whenever I thought of Amanda Bratton, a feeling of congratulation at my escape tempered the bitterness of the memory; and I began to believe again (hardly admitting to myself that I did so) in the purity of woman and the honour of man.

The remembered expression of Miss Haworth's eyes troubled me, and I longed for an opportunity of presenting myself to her in a more correct light. It was some time before such an opportunity occurred. I passed her once on Broadway, on a sunny afternoon, and sometimes saw her through the window of a carriage; but nearly three months elapsed before I was able to speak to her again. Mr. Deering, with whom I had made a slight acquaintance during the dinner at Delmonico's, invited me to call "very sociably" at his house in Fourteenth Street, on a certain evening. I accepted, mainly because I expected to find Penrose there; and, as my duties required me to leave early, made my appearance precisely at the appointed hour. In this respect I

was misled by the words "very sociably," for no other guests had yet arrived, and the rooms were decorated as if for a ball. I experienced a foolish sensation for a moment, as I stood alone in the strong light of gas and the glitter of gilding, but Mrs. Deering did not leave me long in waiting. With her entered, to my surprise, Miss Haworth.

Mrs. Deering was a frail-looking woman, with large dark eyes, and pale, melancholy, interesting face. She received me with perfect grace, and a kindly, winning air, which seemed—I knew not why—to ask for sympathy. At any rate, I gave it, and still I knew not why. In greeting Miss Haworth I offered her my hand, forgetting that my slight acquaintance hardly warranted me in assuming the signs of familiarity; but she took it with a natural, simple courtesy, in which there was no trace of mere conventional politeness. We seated ourselves at the bottom of the apartment, and I had ample time to overcome the first formal stages of conversation before the next arrival. The hostess and Miss Haworth were evidently familiar, if not intimate

friends; they called each other "Fanny" and "Isabel," and frequently referred to mutual experiences and mutual impressions. I saw that both were amiable, cultivated, refined women. The point of difference seemed to be in character—in a certain gentle, reliant, hesitating quality in Mrs. Deering, and its latent opposite in Miss Haworth—for I did not think the latter old enough for marked development. Nevertheless, through all her maidenly sweetness and simplicity, I felt the existence of a firm, heroic spirit. Her pure, liquid voice could under no circumstances become shrill or hard, but its music might express a changeless resolution. Some sense within me, underlying the surface of my talk, continually contrasted her with Amanda Bratton. The consciousness of it annoyed me, but I could not escape from the perverse spirit.

Finally, Mrs. Deering rose and advanced to receive the coming guests, and we were left alone. My thoughts went back to our conversation at the dinner, and I longed for the tact to bring it up naturally. I introduced Matilda Shanks,—a subject

soon exhausted; then Penrose, and here a happy thought came to my aid. I had become not only unembarrassed, but frank, and, almost before I knew it, had described the manner in which we had discovered our relationship.

"I had hardly liked him before that," I said. "I had thought him haughty, cold, and almost incapable of affection—but this was only the outside. He was truly happy to find that we were kin, although I was at that time a raw country-boy, far below him in everything. Since then, we have learned to know each other tolerably well. He is so handsome that I am very glad I can honestly esteem him."

I saw a light like a smile in Miss Haworth's eyes, but it did not reach her lips. "He *is* strikingly handsome," she said; "but it is not a face that one can read easily."

"I think I like it all the better for that," I answered. "It keeps up one's interest; there are so many surprises, as you discover new traits."

"If they were always agreeable surprises."

"I have found them so, in his case."

"You are fortunate, then," said she. Her tone was calm and passionless, and I detected no reason for my suspicion that she did not like Penrose. It almost seemed as if we had changed characters,—as if now the faith were on my side and the distrust on hers. I presently shook off this impression as absurd, and attempted to introduce my explanation before the new guests should interrupt us.

"I think my cousin frequently does injustice to himself," I said. "He is fond of proclaiming a hard, unsympathetic view of life, which does not correspond with his practice. I was at one time in danger of imitating him, because everything did not go according to my wishes. I can't quite recall the words I used in my talk with you at the dinner," (this was false—I knew them every one,) "but I am sure they did not express my true sentiments. I had rather be thought inconsistent than cynical."

"So would I!" she exclaimed, with a merry laugh. "Consistency is a jewel, you know, but the colour of it don't happen to suit my complexion. I am heterodox enough to dislike the word; to me

it signifies something excessively stiff, prim, and tiresome.

I was relieved, but a little surprised, at such an unexpected latitude of opinion in Miss Haworth.

"It dates from my school-days in Troy," she continued, by way of explanation. "Our teacher in Moral Philosophy had a habit of saying,—‘Be consistent, girls!’ on every possible occasion. We all decided that if she was an example of it, consistency was a disagreeable quality; and I am afraid that we tried to get rid of what little we had, instead of cultivating it. I like a character upon which one can depend; but we may honestly change our views."

"Then," said I, "there are also such differences in our moods of feeling. We change like the scenery of land or sea, through green, gray, blue and gold, according to the sun and the clouds. You are right: the same tints for ever would be very tiresome; but we should not half possess our opinions if we were always conscious that we might soon change them for others."

"I wish Mrs. Deering had heard you say that.

We were looking at a new dress of hers just before you came. There was a mixture of colours in it, which, I knew, had only caught her eye by its novelty, and the effect would soon wear off. But when I said so, she put her hand on my mouth, and pleaded,—‘Please don’t say a word against it; let me like it as long as I can.’ I laughed and called her a child, as she is in her frankness and gentleness.”

“She is a very lovely woman,” I said; “but there is something about her which seems to call for help or sympathy. I do not understand it.”

“Is it so palpable?” asked Miss Haworth, in a low voice, as if speaking to herself. The approach of other guests interrupted our conversation, and I had no chance of resuming it during the evening, although we frequently crossed each other’s paths, and exchanged a few words. The “very sociable” entertainment was something more than a reception and something less than a ball. Most of the guests came in full-dress, and I was very glad that I had profited by a hint which Brandagee had once let fall.

"In New York," said he, "it is always safer to over-dress than to under-dress. The former is looked upon as a compliment to the hosts, and no excuse is ever accepted for the latter." The young ladies were all *decolletées*, and their bright heads rose out of wonderful folds and cloudy convolutions of white mist, which followed with soft rustling noises the gliding swing of their forms. I was leaning on the narrow end of the grand piano, listlessly watching them as they moved through the figures of a quadrille, when Mrs. Deering suddenly addressed me with,—

"Don't you dance, Mr. Godfrey?"

"Sometimes," I answered; "but I think I enjoy seeing dancing even more. Somebody says, if one would stop his ears and shut out the music, one would find the movements of the dancers simply ridiculous. I can imagine that this might be true of the gentlemen,—but, certainly, not of the ladies."

"Are we so much more graceful?" she asked.

"No," said I, with plump sincerity; "it is rather the advantage of dress,—the difference between

drapery, which falls into flowing and undulating lines, and a close shell, like that of a tortoise. Besides the shell is black, which robs it of light and shade. Suppose the gentlemen wore Roman togas, —white, with a border of purple, or blue and silver, or crimson and gold,—don't you think the effect would be immensely improved?"

"I must confess the idea never entered my head. You must give me time to think about it before I can answer. It is something new to hear a gentleman speak for the beauty of his sex; *we* are generally allowed the monopoly of that."

I felt embarrassed, and there was an unpleasant sense of heat in my face, which increased as I encountered Miss Haworth's laughing, expectant eyes. She was standing near, and must have heard the whole conversation.

"If I thought myself handsome," I said, at last, "I should never lay myself open to such a charge; but it gives me pleasure to see beauty, Mrs. Deering, whether in woman or man, and I do not understand why custom requires that one sex should help it

with all possible accessories, and the other disguise it."

"Oh, you men don't really need it," began Mrs. Deering. "You have courage, and energy, and genius."—Here she stopped, turned pale, and after a little pause, added with a gaiety not altogether natural, "Shall I find you a partner for the next quadrille?"


I assented, thinking of Miss Haworth; but Mr. Deering came up at that moment and secured her. Mrs. Deering laid her hand on my arm, and we began to thread the disentangling groups as the music ceased. The elegant young gentlemen were already dodging to and fro, and taking their places in anticipation of the next dance: the blooming, girlish faces were snatched away as we approached them, and Mrs. Deering, with a little laugh at our ill-fortune, said, "I must pick out the best of the wall-flowers, after all,—ah! here is one chance yet!"

A moment after, I found myself face to face with—Miss Levi!

"Mr. Godfrey wishes for the pleasure,"—Mrs. Deering began to say, by way of presentation and request.

"Now, Mr. Godfrey!" exclaimed Miss Levi, jumping up and giving me a smart rap with her sandalwood fan,—“you know you don't deserve it! You would never have seen me without Mrs. Deering's help,—and if I accept you, it's for her sake only. He's as false and heartless as he can be, Mrs. Deering!”

If my thought had been expressed in words, I am afraid there would have been a profane verb before Miss Levi's name. I was exasperated by the unexpected encounter, and less than ever disposed to hear her flippant, affected chatter, to which I had responded so often that I was powerless to check it now. As we took our places on the floor, and she spread the scarlet leaves of her fan over the lower part of her face, her jet-black eyes and hair shining at me above them, I thought of the poppy-flower, and the dark, devilish spirit of the drug which feeds it. I tried to shake off the baleful, narcotic influence



which streamed from her, and which seemed to increase in proportion as I resisted it. By a singular chance, Mr. Deering and Miss Haworth were our *vis-à-vis*. I had scarcely noticed this, when the preliminary chords of the quadrille were struck, and the first figure commenced.

"Confess to me, now, Mr. Godfrey," said Miss Levi, when our turn came to rest, "that you are as false in literature as you are in love. You have not been at Mrs. Yorkton's for ever so long."

"I am false to neither," I answered, desperately, "for I believe in neither."

"Oh, I shall become afraid of you." I knew her eyes were upon my face, but I steadily looked away. "You are getting to be misanthropic,—Byronic. Of course there is a cause for it. It is *she* who is false; pardon my harmless jesting; I shall never do so again. But you never thought it serious, did you? I always believed in your truth as I do in your genius."

The last sentences were uttered in a low, gentle, confidential tone, and the fingers that lay upon my

arm closed tenderly around it. I could not help myself: I turned my head, and received the subdued, sympathetic light of the large eyes.

"You are mistaken, Miss Levi," I said; "there is no '*she*' in the case, and there will not be."

"Never!" It was only a whisper, but I despair of representing its peculiar intonation. It set my pulses trembling with a mixture of sensations, in which fear was predominant. I dimly felt that I must somehow disguise my true nature from this woman's view, or become her slave. I must prevaricate, lie,—anything to make her believe me other than my actual self.

The commencement of the second figure relieved me from the necessity of answering her question. When we had walked through it, and I was standing beside her, she turned to me and said,—

"Well!"

"Well?" I echoed.

"You have not answered my question."

I summoned all the powers of dissimulation I possessed, looked her full in the face with an expres-

sion of innocence and surprise, and answered, "What question?"

Her dark brows drew together for an instant, and a rapid glance hurled itself against my face, as if determined to probe me. I bore it with preternatural composure, and, finding she did not speak, repeated,—“What question?”

She turned away, unaware that something very like a scowl expressed itself on her profile, and muttered,—

“It is of no consequence, since you have forgotten it.”

My success emboldened me to go a step further and not merely defend myself, but experiment a little inoffensive tactics.

“Oh, about being false to literature?” I said
“You probably thought I was pledged to it. That is not so; what I have done has been merely a diversion. Having attempted, of course it would not be pleasant to fail; but there is no great satisfaction in success. With your knowledge of authors, Miss Levi, you must be aware that they cannot be called either a happy or a fortunate class of men!”

Again she scrutinized my face,—this time over her fan. I was wonderfully calm and earnest: there is no hypocrisy equal to that of a man naturally frank.

"I am afraid it is true," she answered, at last. "But there are some exceptions, and, with *your* genius, you might be one of them, Mr. Godfrey."

"If my 'genius,' as you are pleased to call it," I said, "can give me a house like this, and large deposits in the banks, I shall be very much obliged to it. I should much rather have splendour than renown: wouldn't you?"

Looking across the floor I met Miss Haworth's eyes, and although she turned them away at once, I caught a glimpse of the quiet, serious observance with which they had rested upon me. I rejoiced that she could not have heard my words. The game I had been playing suddenly became distasteful. Miss Levi's answer showed that she had fallen into the snare; that her enthusiasm for literature and literary men was a shallow affectation, which I might easily have developed further; but I took advantage of the movements of the dance to change the subject.

When the quadrille was finished, I conducted her to a seat, bowed, and left her almost too precipitately for courtesy.

In the meantime Penrose had arrived. I had not seen him for some weeks, and we were having a pleasant talk in a corner of the room when Mrs. Deering, in her arbitrary character of hostess, interrupted us, by claiming him for presentation to some of her friends.

"The partnership is social as well as commercial, is it?" said he. "Then I must go, John."

An imp of mischief prompted me to say to Mrs. Deering, "Introduce him to Miss Levi. Dance with her, if you can, Alexander; I want to hear your impression of her beauty."

"Oh, ho!" he exclaimed, "is she the elected one? By all means. I shall try to find her bewitching, for your sake."

"Alexander!" I cried. But the twain were already moving away, Mrs. Deering looking back to me with a gay, significant smile. I was provoked at myself, and at Penrose. I had honestly wished, for

my own satisfaction, to subject Miss Levi to the test of his greater knowledge of the world, his sharp, merciless dissection of character. Perhaps I thought he could analyze the uncanny, mysterious power which she possessed. But the interpretation he had put upon my words spoiled the plan. And Mrs. Deering, I feared, had accepted that interpretation only too readily. Could she really believe that I was attracted towards Miss Levi? If so, and she mentioned the discovery to Miss Haworth, what must the latter think of me? She, too, had noticed the intimate character of our conversation during the dance; yet she could not, must not be allowed to misunderstand me so shockingly. I worried myself, I have no doubt, a great deal more than was necessary. My surmises involved no compliment to the good sense of the two ladies; and the excitement they occasioned in my mind was inconsistent with the character I had determined to assume.

I looked around for Miss Haworth before leaving the parlour. She was seated at the piano, playing one of Strauss's airy waltzes, while the plain, weary-

looking governess, who had been performing for the two previous hours, was taking a rest and an ice on the sofa. Among the couples which revolved past me were Penrose and Miss Levi, and there was a bright expression of mischief in the former's eye as it met mine.

I went down town to my midnight duties in the office of the 'Wonder,' very much dissatisfied with myself. It seemed that I had stupidly blundered during the whole evening, and had made my position worse than it was before in the eyes of the only woman whom I was anxious to please. The latter fact was now apparent to my consciousness, and when I asked myself "Why?" there was no difficulty in finding reasons. She was handsome; she resembled St. Agnes; I believed her to be a pure, true, noble-hearted girl.

Then I asked myself again, "Anything more?"

And as I stepped over the booming vaults, in which the great iron presses of the 'Wonder' revolved at the rate of twenty thousand copies per hour, and mounted to the stifling room where the

reports on yellow-transfer paper awaited me, I shook my head and made answer unto myself, "No ; nothing more !"

END OF VOL. II.



